# MUSHROOMS ON THE MOOR

F. W. BORTHAM

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# MUSHROOMS ON THE MOOR

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BY

F. W. BOREHAM

AUTHOR OF

'MOUNTAINS IN THE MIST,' 'THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL,' 'THE GOLDEN MILESTONE,' 'THE SILVER SHADOW,' 'THE LUGGAGE OF LIFE,' 'FACES IN THE FIRE,' ETC., ETC.

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# BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

I HAVE allowed the Mushrooms on the Moor to throw the glamour of their name over the entire volume because, in some respects, they are the most typical and representative things in it. They express so little but suggest so much! What fun we had, in the days of auld lang syne, when we scoured the dewy fields in search of them! And yet how small a proportion of our enjoyment the mushrooms themselves represented! Our flushed cheeks, our prodigious appetites, and our boisterous merriment told of gains immensely greater than any that our baskets could have held. What a contrast, for example, between mushrooms from the moor on the one hand and mushrooms from the market on the other! What memories of the soft summer mornings; the fresh and fragrant air; the diffused and misty sunshine; the sparkle of the dew on the tall wisps of speargrass; the beaded and shining cobwebs; the scamper, barefooted, across the glittering green! It was part of childhood's wild romance. And, in the sterner days that have followed those tremendous frolics, we have learned that life is

full of just such suggestive things. As I glance back upon the years that lie behind me, I find that they have been almost equally divided between two hemispheres. But I have discovered that, under any stars,

> There's part o' the sun in an apple;
> There's part o' the moon in a rose;
> There's part o' the flaming Pleiades
> In every leaf that grows.

And I shall reckon this book no failure if some of the ideas that I have tried to suggest are found to point at all steadily to that conclusion.

FRANK W. BOREHAM.

HOBART, TASMANIA,
JUNE, 1915.

# PART I

# I

## A SLICE OF INFINITY

### I

REALLY, as I sit here in this quiet study, and glance round at the books upon the shelves, I can scarcely refrain from laughing at the fun we have had together. And to think of the way in which they came into my possession! It seems like a fairy story or a chapter from romance. If a man wants to spend an hour or so as delightfully as it is possible to spend it, let him invite to his fireside some old and valued friend, the companion of many a frolic and the sharer of many a sorrow; let him seat his old comrade there in the place of honour on the opposite side of the hearth, and then let them talk. 'Do you remember, Tom, the way we met for the first time?' 'My word, I do! Shall I ever forget it?' And Tom slaps his knee at the memory of it, and they enjoy a long and hearty laugh together. It is not that the circumstances under which they met were

so ludicrous or dramatic; it is that they were so commonplace. It seems, on looking back, the oddest chance in the world that first brought them together, the merest whim of chance, the veriest freak of circumstance; and yet how all life has taken its colour and drawn its enrichment from that casual meeting! They happened to enter the same compartment of a railway train; or they sat next each other on the tramcar; or they walked home together from a political meeting; or they caught each other admiring the same rose at a flower show. Neither sought the other; neither felt the slightest desire for the other; neither knew, until that moment, of the existence of the other; and yet there it is! They met; and out of that apparently accidental meeting there has sprung up a friendship that many changes cannot change, and a love that many waters cannot quench. Either would cross all the continents and oceans of the world to-day to find the other; but as they remember how they met for the first time it seems too queer to be credible. And they lie back in their easy chairs and laugh again.

## II

That is why I laugh at my books. Some day I intend to draw up a list of them and divide them

into classes. In one class I shall put the books that I bought, once upon a time, because I was given to understand that they were the right sort of books to have. Everybody else had them; and my shelves would therefore be scarcely decent without them. I purchased them, accordingly, and they have stood on the shelves there ever since. As far as I know they have done nobody the slightest harm in all their long untroubled lives. Indeed, they have imparted such an air of gravity, and such an odour of sanctity, to the establishment as must have had a steadying effect on their less sombre companions. But it is not at these formidable volumes that I am laughing. I would not dare. I glance at them with reverential awe, and am more than half afraid of them. Then, again, there are other books that I bought because I felt that I needed them. And so I did, more than perhaps I guessed when I bore them proudly home. Glorious times I have had with them. I look up at them gratefully and lovingly. It is not at these that I am laughing. But there are others, old and trusted friends, that came into my life in the oddest possible way. I do not mean that I stole them. I mean rather that they stole me. They seemed to pounce out at me, and before I knew what had happened I belonged to them: I certainly did not seek them. In some cases I never heard of their existence until after they became

my own. They have since proved invaluable to me, and I can scarcely review our long companionship without emotion. Yet when I glance up at them, and remember the whimsical way in which we met for the first time, I can scarce restrain my laughter.

## III

It was like this. Years ago I went to an auction sale. A library was being submitted to the hammer. The books were all tied up in lots. The work had evidently been done by somebody who knew as much about books as a Hottentot knows about icebergs. John Bunyan was tied tightly to Nat Gould, and Thomas Carlyle was firmly fastened to Charles Garvice. I looked round; took a note of the numbers of those lots that contained books that I wanted, and waited for the auctioneer to get to business. In due time I became the purchaser of half a dozen lots. I had bought six books that I wanted, and thirty that I didn't. Now the question arose: What shall I do with these thirty waifs and strays? I glanced over them and took pity on them. Many of them dealt with matters in which I had never taken the slightest interest. But were they to blame for that? or was I? I saw at once that the fault was entirely mine, and that these

unoffending volumes had absolutely nothing to be ashamed of. I vowed that I would read the lot, and I did. From one or two of them I derived as far as I know, no profit at all. But these were the exceptions. Some of these volumes have been the delight of my life during all the days of my pilgrimage. And as I look tenderly up at them, as they stand in their very familiar places before me, I salute them as the two old comrades saluted each other across the hearthstone. But I cannot help laughing at the odd manner of our first acquaintance. It was thus that I learned one of the most valuable lessons that experience ever taught me. It is sometimes a fine thing to sample infinity.

## IV

When I was a small boy I dreaded the policeman; when I grew older I feared the bookseller. And as the years go by I find that my dread of the policeman has quite evaporated, but my fear of the bookseller grows upon me. I had an idea as a boy that one day a policeman, mistaking my identity, would snatch me up and hurl me into some horrid little dungeon, where I might languish for many a long day. But since I have grown up I have discovered that it is only the bookseller who does that sort of thing. And in his case he does it deliberately and of malice

aforethought. It is no case of mistaken identity; he knows who you are, and he knows you are innocent. But he has his dungeon ready. The bookseller is a very dangerous person, and every member of the community should guard against his blandishments. It is not that he will sell you too many books. He will probably not sell you half as many as are good for you. But he will sell you the wrong books. He will sell you the books you least need, and keep on his own shelves the intellectual pabulum for which your soul is starving. And all with a view to getting you at last into his wretched little dungeon. See how he goes about it. A friend of yours goes to the West Indies. You suddenly wake up to the fact that you know very little about that wonderful region. You go to your bookseller and ask for the latest reliable work on the West Indies. You buy it, and he, the rascal, takes a mental note of the fact. Next time you walk into the shop he is at you like a flash.

'Good afternoon, sir. You are specially interested, I know, in the West Indies. We have a very fine thing coming out now in monthly parts . . .'

And so on. His attribution to you of special interest in the West Indies is no empty flattery. The book you bought on your first visit has charmed you, and you are most deeply and sincerely interested in those fascinating islands. You order the

monthly parts and the interest deepens. The bookseller does the thing so slyly that you do not notice that he is boxing you up in the West Indies. He is doing in sober fact what the policeman did in childish imagination. He is driving us into a blind alley, and, unless we are very careful, he will have us cribb'd, cabin'd, and confined before we know where we are.

## V

It was my experience in the auction-room that saved me. When I had read all these books which I should never have bought if I could have helped it, I discovered the folly of buying books that interest you. If a book appeals to me at first sight it is probably because I know a good deal about the subject with which it deals. But, as against that, see how many subjects there are of which I know nothing at all! And just look at all these books that have no attraction for me! And tell me this: Why do they not appeal to me? Only one answer is possible. They do not appeal to me because I am so grossly, wofully, culpably ignorant of the subjects whereof they treat. If, therefore, my bookseller approaches me, with a nice new book under his arm, and observes coaxingly that he knows I am interested in history, I always ask

him to be good enough to show me the latest work on psychology. If he reminds me of my fondness for astronomy, I ask him for a handbook of botany. If he refers to my predilection for agriculture, I inquire if there is anything new in the way of poetry ; and if he politely refers to my weakness for the West Indies, I ask him to bring me something dealing with Lapland. The bookseller must be circumvented, defeated, and crushed at any cost. He is too clever at trapping us in his narrow little cell. If a man wants to feel that the world is wide, and a good place to live in, he must be for ever and for ever sampling infinity. He must shun the books that he dearly wants to buy, and buy the books he would do anything to shun.

## VI

Yes, I bought thirty-six books that day in the auction-room ; six that I wanted and thirty that I didn't. And some of those thirty volumes have been the charmers of my solitude and the classics of my soul ever since. I do not advise any man to rush off to the nearest auction mart and repeat my experiment. We must not gamble with life. Infinity must be sampled intelligently. But, if a man is to keep himself alive in a world like this, infinity must be sampled. Like a dog on a country

road I must poke into as many holes as I can. If I am naturally fond of music, I had better study mining. If I love painting, I shall be wise to go in for gardening. If I glory in the seaside, I must make a point of climbing mountains and scouring the bush. If I am attached to the things just under my nose, I must be careful to read books dealing with distant lands. If I am deeply interested in contemporary affairs, I must at once read the records of the days of long ago and explore the annals of the splendid past. I must be faithful to old friends, but I must get to know new people and to know them well. If I hold to one opinion, I must studiously cultivate the acquaintance of men who hold the opposite view, and investigate the hidden recesses of their minds with scientific and painstaking diligence. Above all must I be constantly sampling infinity in matters of faith. If I find that the Epistles are gaining a commanding influence upon my mind, I must at once set out to explore the prophets. If I find some special phase of truth powerfully attracting me, I must, without shunning it, pay increasing attention to all other aspects. 'The Lord has yet more truth to break from out His Word!' said John Robinson; and I must try to find it. Mr. Goodman is a splendid fellow; but he fell in love with one lonely little truth one day, and now he never

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thinks or reads or preaches of any other. It would be his salvation, and the salvation of his people, if he would set out to climb the peaks that have no attraction for him. He would find, when he stood on their sunlit summits, that they too are part of God's great world. He would have the time of his life if he would only commence to sample infinity. His people are accustomed to seeing him every now and again in a new suit of clothes. If he begins to-day to sample infinity, they will next week experience a fresh sensation. They will see the same suit of clothes with a new man inside it.

## II

## READY-MADE CLOTHES

CARLYLE, as everybody knows, once wrote a Philosophy of Clothes, and called it *Sartor Resartus*. He did his work so thoroughly and so exhaustively and so well that, from that day to this, nobody else has cared to tackle the theme. It is high time, however, that it was pointed out that with one important aspect of his tremendous subject he does not attempt to deal. Surely there ought to have been a chapter on Ready-made Clothes!

I am surprised that Henry Drummond never drew attention to the glaring omission, for, if Drummond hated one thing more than another, he loathed and detested ready-made clothes. They were his pet aversion. Ready-made clothes, he used to say, were things that were made to fit everybody, and they fitted nobody. Men are not made by machinery and in sizes; and it follows as a natural consequence that clothes that are so

made will not fit men. The man who is an exact duplicate of the tailor's model has not yet been born. How Carlyle's omission escaped the censure of Drummond I cannot imagine. It is true that Drummond was not particularly attracted by Carlyle; he preferred Emerson. I am certain that if Drummond had read *Sartor Resartus* at all carefully he would have exposed the discrepancy, and Carlyle is therefore to be congratulated on a very narrow escape.

Drummond's hatred of ready-made clothes is the essential thing about him. I happened to be lecturing on Drummond the other evening, and I felt it my duty to point out that Drummond would take his place in history, not as a scientist nor as an evangelist, nor as a traveller, nor as an author, but as the uncompromising and relentless assailant of ready-made clothes. Unless you grasp this, you will never understand him. He scorned all affectations and imitations. He would adopt no style of dress simply because it was usual under certain conditions. 'He was,' as an eye-witness of his ordination remarks, 'the last man whom you could place by the woman's canon of dress. And yet his dress was a marvel of adaptation to the part he happened to be playing. On his ordination day, when most men assume a garb severely clerical, he was dressed like a country

squire, thus proclaiming to fathers and brethren, and to all the world, that he was not going to allow ordination to play havoc with his chosen career.' Now this was typical, and it is its typical quality that is important. It applied not to dress alone. It applied to speech. Drummond would affect no style of address simply on the ground that it was usual upon certain platforms or in certain rostrums. Did it fit him? Was it simple, natural, easy, effective? If not, he would not use it. Nor would he adopt a course of procedure simply because it was customary and was considered correct. If, to him, it seemed like wearing ready-made clothes, he would have none of it. Here you have the key to his whole life. Everything had to fit him like a glove, or he would have nothing to do with it. His scientific lectures, his evangelistic addresses, his personal interviews with students, even his public prayers, were modelled on no regulation standard, on no established precedent; they were couched in the language, and expressed in the style, that most perfectly suited his own charming and magnetic individuality.

Professor James, of Harvard, said of Henri Bergson, the Parisian philosopher, that his utterance fitted his thought like that elastic silk underclothing which follows every movement of the skin. Drummond would have considered

that the ideal. Generally speaking, he was impervious to criticism; but if you had told him that a single phrase rang hollow, or that some expression had savoured of artificiality, or that even a gesture appeared like affectation, you would have stabbed him to the quick. It was a great question in his day as to whether he was orthodox or heterodox. Drummond regarded all standards of orthodoxy and of heterodoxy as so many tailors' models. Orthodoxy and heterodoxy stand related to truth just as those wonderful wickerwork stands and plaster busts that adorn every dressmaker's establishment stand related to the grace and beauty of the female form. If you had asked Drummond to what school of thought he belonged, he would have told you that he never wore ready-made clothes.

I tremble lest, one of these days, these notions of mine on the subject of ready-made clothes should assume the proportions of a sermon, and demand pulpit utterance. There will at any rate be no difficulty in providing them with a text. The classical instance of the contemptuous rejection of ready-made clothing was, of course, David's refusal to wear Saul's armour. There is a world of significance in that old-world story. Saul's armour is a very fine thing—*for Saul*! But if David feels that he can do better work with a

sling, then, in the name of all that is reasonable, give him a sling! If he has to fight Goliath, why hamper him with ready-made clothes? I began by saying that Carlyle omitted to deal, in *Sartor Resartus*, with this profound branch of his subject. But he saw the importance of it for all that. In his *Frederick the Great*, he tells us how the young prince's iron-handed father employed a learned university professor to teach the boy theology. The doctor dosed his youthful pupil with creeds and catechisms until his brain whirled with meaningless tags and phrases. And in recording the story Carlyle bursts out upon the dry-as-dust professor. 'In heaven's name,' he cries, 'teach the boy nothing at all, or else teach him something that he will know, as long as he lives, to be eternally and indisputably true!'

Now what is this fine outburst of thunderous wrath but an emphatic protest against the use of ready-made clothes? A man's faith should fit him like the clothes for which he has been most carefully measured, if not like the elastic silk to which the Harvard professor refers. A man might as well try to wear his father's clothes as try to wear his father's faith. It will never really fit him. There is a great expression near the end of the brief Epistle of Jude that always seems to me very striking. 'But ye, beloved,' says the writer,

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'building up yourselves on your most holy faith.' That is the only satisfactory way of building—to build on your own site. If I build my house on another man's piece of ground, it is sure to cause trouble sooner or later. Build your own character on your own faith, says the apostle; and there is sound sense in the injunction. It is better for me to build a very modest little house of my own on a little bit of land that really belongs to me than to build a palace on somebody else's soil. It is better for me to build up my character, very unpretentiously, perhaps, on my own faith, than to erect a much more imposing structure on another man's creed. That is the philosophy of ready-made clothes, disguised under a slight change of metaphor.

I have heard that some people spend their time in church inspecting other people's clothes. If that is so, they must be profoundly impressed by the amazing proportion of misfits. The souls of thousands are quite obviously clad in ready-made garments. Here is the spirit of a bright young girl decked out in all the contents of her grandmother's spiritual wardrobe. The clothes fitted the grandmother perfectly; the old lady looked charming in them; but the grand-daughter looks ridiculous. I was once at a testimony meeting. The thing that most impressed me was the

continual repetition of certain phrases. Speaker after speaker rang the changes on the same stereotyped expressions. I saw at once that I had fallen among a people who went in for ready-made clothes.

The thing takes even more objectionable forms. Those who are half as fond as I am of Mark Rutherford will have already recalled Frank Palmer in *Clara Hopgood*. 'He accepted willingly,' we are told, 'the household conclusions on religion and politics, but they were not properly his, for he accepted them merely as conclusions and without the premisses, and it was often even a little annoying to hear him express some free opinion on religious questions in a way which showed that it was not a growth, but something picked up.' Everybody who has read the story remembers the moral tragedy that followed. What else could you expect? There is always trouble if a man builds his house on another man's site. The souls of men were never meant to be attired in ready-made clothes. Somebody has finely said that Truth must be born again in the secret silence of each individual life.

For the matter of that, the philosophy of ready-made clothes applies as much to unbelief as to faith. Now and then one meets a mind distracted by genuine doubt, and it is refreshing and stimulating to grapple with its problems. One respects

the doubter because the doubt fits him like the elastic silk; it seems a part and parcel of his personality. But at other times one can see at a glance that the doubter is all togged out in ready-made clothes, and, like a bird in borrowed plumes, is inordinately proud of them. Here are the same old questions, put in the same old way, and with a certain effrontery that knows nothing of inner anguish or even deep sincerity. One feels that his visitor has seen this gaudy mental outfit cheaply displayed at the street corner, and has snapped it up at once in order to impress you with the gorgeous spectacle. How often, too, one is made to feel that the blatancy of the infidel lecturer, or the flippancy of the sceptical debater, is simply a matter of ready-made clothes. The awful grandeur of the subjects of which they treat has evidently never appealed to them. They are merely echoing quibbles that are as old as the hills; they are wearing clothes that may have fitted Hobbes, Paine, or Voltaire, but that certainly were not made to fit their more meagre stature. Doubt is a very human and a very sacred thing, but the doubt that is merely assumed is, of all affectations, the most repellent.

If some suspicious reader thinks that I am overestimating the danger of wearing ready-made clothes, I need only remind him that even such

gigantic humans as James Chalmers, of New Guinea, and Robert Louis Stevenson feared that ready-made clothes might yet stand between the Church and her conquest of the world. Some of the missionaries insisted in clothing the natives of New Guinea in the garb of Old England, but Chalmers protested, and protested vigorously. 'I am opposed to it,' he exclaimed. 'My experience is that clothing natives is nearly as bad as introducing spirits among them. Wherever clothing has been introduced, the natives are disappearing before various diseases, especially consumption, and I am fully convinced that the same will happen in New Guinea. Our civilization, whatever it is, is unfitted for them in their present state, and no attempt should be made to force it upon them.'

With this, Robert Louis Stevenson most cordially concurred. Nobody who knows him will suspect Stevenson of any lack of gallantry, but he always eyed the arrival of the missionary's wife with a certain amount of apprehension. 'The married missionary,' says Stevenson, 'may offer to the native what he is much in want of—a higher picture of domestic life; but the woman at the missionary's elbow tends to keep him in touch with Europe, and out of touch with Polynesia, and threatens to perpetuate, and even to ingrain, parochial decencies far best forgotten. The mind of the

lady missionary tends to be continually busied about dress. She can be taught with extreme difficulty to think any costume decent but that to which she grew accustomed on Clapham Common; and to gratify her prejudice, the native is put to useless expense, his mind is tainted with the morbidities of Europe, and his health is set in danger.' We remember the pride with which poor John Williams, the martyr missionary of Erromanga, viewed the introduction of bonnets among the women of Raratonga; but it was not the greatest of his triumphs after all. The bonnets have vanished long ago, but the fragrant influence of John Williams abides perpetually. We sometimes forget that our immaculate tweed trousers and our dainty skirts and blouses are no essential part of the Christian gospel. As a matter of fact, that gospel was first revealed to a people who knew nothing of such trappings. We do not necessarily hasten the millennium by introducing among untutored races a carnival of ready-made clothes.

And it is just as certain that you do not bring the soul nearer to its highest goal by forcing on it a fashion for which it is totally unsuited. And here I come back to Drummond. During his last illness at Tunbridge Wells, he remarked that, at the age of twelve, he made a conscientious study of Bonar's *God's Way of Peace*. 'I fear,' he

said, 'that the book did me more harm than good. I tried to force my inner experience into the mould represented by that book, and it was impossible.' In one of Moody's after-meetings in London, Drummond was dealing with a young girl who was earnestly seeking the Saviour. At last he startled her by exclaiming, 'You must give up reading James's *Anxious Enquirer*.' She wondered how he had guessed that she had been reading it; but he had detected from her conversation that she was making his own earlier mistake. She was trying to think as John Angell James thought, to weep as he wept, and to find her way to faith precisely as he found his. Drummond told her to read nothing but the New Testament, and, he said later on, 'A fortnight of that put her right!'

There lies the whole secret. Our souls no more resemble each other than our bodies; they are not made in a mould and turned out by the million. No two are exactly alike. Ready-made clothes will never exactly fit. Bonar and James, Bunyan and Law, Doddridge and Wesley, Müller and Spurgeon, may help me amazingly. They may help me by showing me how they—each for himself—found their way into the presence of the Eternal and, like Christian at the Palace Beautiful, were robed and armed for pilgrimage. But if

they lead me to suppose that I must experience their sensations, enjoy their elations, pass through their depressions, struggle and laugh and weep and sing just as they did, they have done me serious damage. They have led me away from those secret chambers in which the King adorns the soul in beautiful and comely garments, and they have left me a mere wearer of ready-made clothes.

## III

## THE HIDDEN GOLD

I WAS enjoying the very modest but very satisfying pleasures of a ride in a tramcar when the following adventure befell me. It was a bright, sunny winter's day; the scenery on either hand was extremely delightful; and I was cogitating upon the circumstance that so much felicity could be obtained in return for so small an expenditure. But my admiration of mountain and river and bush was suddenly and rudely interrupted. A lady fellow passenger reported that, since entering the car, three sovereigns had been extracted from her purse. That she had them when she stepped into the car she knew for certain, for she remembered seeing them when she opened the purse to pay her fare. She had taken out the two pennies, inserted the ticket in their place, and returned the purse to her handbag, which had been lying on the seat beside her. The inspector had now boarded the car; she had opened her purse to

take out the ticket, and, lo, the gold had gone! It was a most embarrassing situation. I was ruefully speculating as to how I should again face my congregation after being shadowed by such a dark suspicion. When, as abruptly as it had arisen, the mystery happily cleared. With the most profuse apologies, the lady explained that it was her birthday; her daughter had that morning presented her with a new purse; the compartments of this receptacle were more elaborate and ingenious than she had noticed; and she had found the sovereigns reposing in a division of the purse which had eluded her previous observation. There was no more to be said. We wished the poor beflustered soul many happy returns of the day; she left the car at the next corner; and I once more abandoned myself to the charms of the landscape.

Now, this sort of thing is very common. We are continually fancying that we have been robbed of the precious things we still possess. The old lady who searches everywhere for the spectacles that adorn her temples; the clerk who ransacks the office for the pen behind his ear; and the boy who charges his brother with the theft of the penknife that lurks in the mysterious depths of his own fearful and wonderful pocket — these are each of them typical of much.

I happened the other evening to saunter into a room in which a certain debating society was holding its weekly meeting. The paper out of which the discussion arose had been read before my arrival. But I gathered from the remarks of the speakers that it had dealt with a scientific subject, and that questions of antiquity, geology, and evolution were involved. After the fashion of debating societies, the entire universe was promptly subjected to a complete overhaul. If the truth must be told, I am afraid that I must confess to having forgotten the eloquent contentions of the different speakers; but out of the hurly-burly of that wordy conflict one utterance comes back to me. It appealed to me at the time as being very curious, very pathetic, and very striking. It made upon my mind an indelible impression. A tall young fellow rose, and, in the shortest speech of the debate, imparted to the discussion the only touch of real feeling by which it was illumined. I do not know what it was that had struck so deep a chord in his soul and set it all vibrating. It is wonderful how some stray sound or sight or scent will sometimes summon to the mind a rush of sacred memories. After a preliminary platitude or two, this speaker suddenly referred to the connexion between science and faith. His eyes flashed with manifest feeling; his whole being took on the tone of a man in deadly earnest; his

voice quivered with emotion. In one vivid sentence he graphically described his aged grandfather as the old man donned his spectacles and devoutly read—his faith unclouded by any shadow of doubt—his morning chapter from the well-worn, large-type Bible. And then, with a ring of such genuine passion that it sounded to me like the cry of a creature in pain, he exclaimed, 'And, gentlemen, I would give both my hands, and give them cheerfully, if I could believe as my old grandfather believed!' He immediately sat down. One or two members coughed. I could see from the faces of the others that they all felt that the debate was getting out of bounds. The world was wide, and the solar system fairly extensive; but this speaker had wandered beyond the remotest frontiers of the universe. And yet to me the utterance to which they had just listened was the speech of the evening, the one speech to be remembered: '*Gentlemen, I would give both my hands, and give them cheerfully, if I could believe as my grandfather believed!*'

Now this was very pathetic, this pair of eager eyes suddenly turned inward; this discovery of an empty soul; this comparison with his grandfather's golden hoard; and this pitiful confession of abject poverty. I felt sorry for him, just as I felt sorry for the lady in the tramcar. The lady in the tramcar looked into a purse that she thought to be empty,

and suffered all the agony of a great loss. The young fellow in the debating society looked into the recesses of his own spirit, and cried out that there was nothing there. And it was all a mistake—in both cases. The sovereigns were in the purse after all. And faith was in the apparently empty soul after all. But neither of the victims knew that they possessed what they lamented. They were both exactly like the old lady with the spectacles on her temples, like the clerk with his pen behind his ear, like the boy with the penknife in his pocket. In the case of the lady in the car the similitude is clear enough. I aspire to show that the analogy applies just as surely to the young fellow and his faith. And to that end let me raise a cloud of questions as a dog might start a covey of birds.

Why does this young man sigh for his grandfather's faith? Was his grandfather's a true faith or a false faith? If his grandfather's faith was a false faith, why does he himself so passionately covet it? Does not the very fact that he so earnestly desires his grandfather's faith as his own faith prove that he is certain that his grandfather's faith was true? And if, in the very soul of him, he feels that his grandfather's faith was true, does it not follow that he has already set his seal to the faith of his grandfather? Is he not proving most conclusively by his flashing eyes, his fervent manner, and

his quivering voice that he believes most firmly in his grandfather's faith? And, if that is so, is it not a case of the lady in the tramcar over again? Is he not crying out that his soul is empty, whilst, in a secret and unexplored recess of that same soul, there reposes the very faith for which he cries?

When I was a very small boy I believed in the Man in the Moon; I believed in Santa Claus; I believed in old Mother Hubbard; I believed in the Fairy Godmother; I believed in ghosts and brownies and witches and trolls. It was a wonderful creed, that creed of my infancy. It has gone now, and it has gone unwept and unsung. I never catch myself saying that I would give my two hands, and give them cheerfully, if I could believe in those things all over again. That puerile faith was a false faith; and because I now know it to have been fictitious I smile at it to-day, and never dream of wishing that I still believed in the Man in the Moon. And, when, on the contrary, I catch a man saying with wet eyes that he would give both his hands, and give them cheerfully, if he could believe as his grandfather did, I see before me indubitable evidence of the fact that, all unconsciously, grandsire and grandson have both subscribed with fervour to the selfsame stately faith.

But, to save us from the sin of prosiness, let us indulge in a little romance. Harry and Edith are

lovers; but last evening, in the course of a stroll by the side of the sea, a dark cloud swept over the golden tranquillity of their enchantment. They parted at length—not as they usually do. When poor ruffled little Edith reached her dainty room, she flung herself in a tempest of tears upon the snowy counterpane, and sobbed again and again and again, 'I would give anything if I could love him as I loved him yesterday!' And all the while Harry, with white and tearless face, and his soul in a tumult of agitation, is lying back in his chair before the fire, his hands in his pockets, saying to himself over and over again, 'I would give anything if I could love her as I loved her yesterday!' Now here are a pair of fascinating specimens for psychological analysis! Why is Edith so anxious to love Harry as she loved him yesterday? Why is Harry so eager to love Edith as he loved her yesterday? You do not passionately desire to love a person whom you do not love. The secret is out! Edith sobs to herself, 'I would give anything to love Harry as I loved him yesterday!' because, being the silly little goose that she is, she does not recognize that she *does* love Harry as she loved him yesterday. And Harry, logical in everything but in love, does not see, as he sits there muttering, that his very anxiety to love Edith just as he loved her yesterday is the best proof that he could possibly have that his love

for Edith has undergone no change. Each is peering into a purse that appears to be empty; each is crying for the gold that seems to have gone; and each is ignorant of the fact that their wealth is still with them, but is for a moment eluding their agitated scrutiny.

The philosophy that the new purse revealed to me is capable of an infinity of applications. The fact is that faith is always the unknown dimension. A man may know how many children he has, and how much money he has; but no man knows how much faith he has. Everybody who has read Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* remembers the petty squabbles of Voltaire, Maupertius, and the other thinkers who moved about the person of that famous prince. They seemed to have been for ever twitting each other with getting ill, and, notwithstanding their philosophy, sending for a priest to minister beside their supposed deathbeds. I have heard sceptics and infidels charged with hypocrisy on the ground that, in the face of sudden terror, they had been known to call upon that God whose very existence they denied. I am bound to say that I do not think the evidence sufficient to substantiate the charge. There was no hypocrisy, but the sudden discovery of unsuspected faith. In the tumult of emotion induced by sudden fear, a secret compartment of the soul was opened, and the

faith that was regarded as lost was found to be tranquilly reposing there.

Perhaps it was just as well that the lady in the tramcar had this embarrassing experience. It was good for her to have felt the anguish of imaginary loss, for it led her to discover that her purse was a more complicated thing than she had supposed. It will do my friend of the debating society a world of good to make the same discovery. The soul is not so simple as it seems. You cannot press a spring at a given moment, and take in all its contents at one glance. And it was certainly good for my lady fellow traveller to find that the gold was still there. She needed it, or its loss would not have thrown her into such a fever. That is the thing that strikes me about my friend the debater. He evidently needed the faith for which he cried so passionately. Faith, like gold, is for use and not for ornament. Yes, he needed the faith that he could not find; needed it, perhaps, more sorely than he knew. And now that I have proved to him that, in some secret recess, the treasure still lurks, I am hopeful that, like the lady in the car, he will smile at his former anguish, and live like a lord on the wealth that he has found.

## IV

## 'SUCH A LOVELY BITE!'

It is a keen, clear, frosty winter's night, and I am sitting here in a cheerfully lighted dining-room only a few feet from a roaring fire. An immense chasm sometimes yawns between afternoon and evening, and it seems scarcely credible that, only an hour or two ago, I was out on the river in an open boat, fishing. It was a glorious sunny afternoon when we pushed off; the great hills around were at their greenest; and the only reminder vouchsafed to us that to-morrow is midwinter's day was the glitter of snow away on the top of the mountain. The water around us, reflecting the cloudless sky above, was a sea of sapphire, out of which our oars seemed to beat up pearls and silver. Arrived at our favourite fishing grounds, we lay quietly at anchor, and for a while the sport was excellent. But, later on, things quietened down. The fish forsook us, or became too dainty for our blandishments. The sun went

down over the massive ridges. A hint of evening brooded over us. The blue died out of the water, and the greenness vanished from the hills. Everything was grey and cold. As though to match the gloom around us, we ourselves grew silent. Conversation languished, and laughter was dead. We turned up the collars of our coats, and grimly bent over our lines. But the cod and the perch were proof against all our cajolery, and would not be enticed. At length my hands grew so cold and numb that I could scarcely feel the line. My enthusiasm sank with the temperature, and I suggested, not without trepidation, that we should give it up. My companions assented to the abstract proposition; but, with that wistful half-expectancy so characteristic of anglers, did not at once commence to wind up their lines. I was, therefore, just on the point of setting them an example when one of them exclaimed excitedly, 'Wait a second; I had *such a lovely bite*!' That was all; but it gave us a fresh lease of life. For half an hour we forgot the hardening cold and the deepening gloom, and chatted again as merrily as when we baited our hooks for the first time. It was a bite; that was all. But, oh, the thrill of a bite when patience is flagging and endurance ebbing out!

It is because of a certain cynical tendency to

deride the value of a bite that I have decided to spend the evening with my pen. 'A bite!' says somebody, with a fine guffaw. 'And what on earth is the good of a bite, I should like to know? A bite is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring! A bite is of no use for breakfast, dinner, tea, or supper! Bites can neither be fried nor boiled, measured nor weighed. A bite, indeed!'—and once more the cynic loses himself in laughter. That is all he knows about it, and it merely supplies us with another evidence of the superficiality of cynicism. The critic is sometimes right, but the cynic is never right; and the roar of laughter that I hear from the cynic's chair, as he talks about bites, is, therefore, rightly translated and interpreted, a kind of thunderous applause. Why, in some respects, a bite is better than a fish. Only very occasionally does a fish look as well on the bank or in the boat as it appeared to the excited imagination of the angler when he first felt the flutter on the line. I have caught thousands of fish in my time; but most of them I have dismissed from memory as soon as they went flapping into the basket. But some of the bites that I have had! I catch myself wondering now what beauteous monsters they can have been.

'Well, and how many did you catch?' I am regularly asked on my return.

'Oh, a couple of dozen or so; but, oh, I had such a bite! . . .'

And so on. It is the bite that lingers fondly in the memory, that haunts the fancy for days afterwards, and that rushes back upon the angler in his dreams.

'Oh, I've lost him!' one of my companions called out from the other end of the boat this afternoon. 'He got off the line just after I started to draw him in; such a lovely bite; I'm sure it was the biggest fish we've had round here this afternoon!'

Of course it was! The bite is always the biggest fish. There is something very charming—something of which the cynic knows nothing at all—about this propensity of ours to attribute superlative qualities to the unrealized. It is a species of philosophic chivalry. It is a courtesy that we extend to the unknown. We do not know whether the joys that never visited us were really great or small, so we gallantly allow them the benefit of the doubt. The geese that came waddling over the hill are geese, all of them, and as geese we write them down; but the geese that never came over the hill are swans every one, and no swans that we have fed beside the lake glided hither and thither half as gracefully.

A young girl comes to my study. She is tall and

comely, and her face reveals a quiet beauty. But she is dressed in black, and the marks of a great sorrow are stamped upon her pale, drawn countenance. My heart goes out to her as she tells her story. It was so entirely unexpected, so totally unthought of, this sudden loss of her lover. Just as she was dreaming of orange-blossoms for her own hair, her fingers were employed upon a wreath of lilies for his bier. As she sat in the church on that dark and dreadful day, the organ that she fancied greeting her with a wedding march set all the aisles shuddering to a dirge. And her unfinished bridal array had all been laid aside that she might garb her graceful form in gloom. As I looked into her sad eyes, swollen with weeping, I fancied that I could see into her very soul, and scan the secret pictures she had painted there. The happy wedding, with all its nonsense and solemnity, its laughter and its tears; the pretty little home, with his chair of honour, like a throne, facing hers; his home-coming evening by evening, and the welcome she would give him; the children, too—the sons so handsome and the girls so fair! What art gallery contains paintings so perfect? I saw them all—these lovely visions hung with crape! And as I saw them, I reverenced our sweet human habit of attributing impossible glories to the unrealized.

And what about the parents of the baby I buried

yesterday? Are there no pictures in these stricken souls worth viewing? As you pass through these chambers of imagery, and view one of these exquisitely painted pictures after another, you have the whole splendid career mapped out before you. Such triumphs, such honours, such laurels for his brow! The glory of the life that would have been is spread out before their fancy, sketched in the fairest colours! Thus tenderly do we set a halo on the forehead of the unrealized! Thus charitably do we let the fancy play about the fish we never caught! Let the cynic hush his sacrilegious laughter! There is something about all this that is very human, and very beautiful.

And just because it is so beautiful, it is worth analysing, this thrill of joy that I feel when the fish tugs at my line. I shall try to take the sensation to pieces, in order that I may find out exactly of what it consists. I suppose that, really, the secret is: I am pleased to feel that my bait has some attraction for the fish that I now know to be there. It is horrid to keep on fishing whilst your mind is haunted by the suspicion that your hooks are bare, or that they are baited in such a way that they make no appeal to the fish that may be swarming around you. The sudden bite settles all that, and you feel every faculty start up to vigorous life once more.

Now, as a matter of fact, there are few things more

pathetic than the feeling that sometimes steals over the best of men, that there is nothing in them to attract the affection, the friendship, and the confidence of others. The classical instance is the case of Mark Rutherford. How his lonely soul ached for comradeship! 'I wanted a friend,' he says. 'How the dream haunted me! It made me restless and anxious at the sight of every new face, wondering whether at last I had found that for which I searched as if for the kingdom of heaven. God knows that I would have stood against a wall and have been shot for any man whom I loved as cheerfully as I would have gone to bed, but nobody seemed to wish for such a love or to know what to do with it!' Here is the poor fisherman, who feels that he has no bait that the fish want. It was not as though he caught the perch whilst the cod fought shy of him. 'I was avoided,' he says elsewhere, 'both by the commonplace and by those who had talent. Commonplace persons avoided me because I did not chatter, and persons of talent because I stood for nothing—*there was nothing in me!*' But, just as he was giving up, Mark Rutherford felt the line tremble, and knew the ecstasy of a bite! He was suddenly befriended. 'Oh, the transport of it!' he exclaims. 'It was as if water had been poured on a burnt hand, or some miraculous Messiah had soothed the delirium of a fever-stricken sufferer, and replaced

his visions of torment with dreams of Paradise.' The world holds more of this sort of thing than we think. A writer who cannot get readers, a preacher who cannot get hearers, a tradesman who cannot get customers—it is the same old trouble. Fishing, fishing, fishing, until the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. Fishing, fishing, fishing, until the whole world seems to be pouring its contempt upon the unhappy fisherman. Fishing, fishing, fishing, until a man feels that there is nothing in him, nothing in him, *nothing in him*; and the contempt of his fellows leads to the anguish and hollow laughter of self-derision. Oh, what a bite means at such an hour! 'Blessed are they,' exclaims poor Mark Rutherford, 'who heal us of our self-despisings! Of all services which can be done to man, I know of none more precious.'

But even a bite may do a man a great deal of harm unless he thinks it out very carefully. It is certainly very annoying, after waiting so long, to feel that the fish has come—and gone again! A fisherman must guard against being soured and embittered just at that point. It was the tragedy of Miss Havisham. Everybody who has read *Great Expectations* remembers Miss Havisham. In some respects she is Dickens' most striking and dramatic character. Poor Miss Havisham had been disappointed on her wedding-day; and, in

revenge, she remained for the rest of her life dressed just as she was dressed when the blow staggered her. When Pip came upon her, years afterwards, she was still wearing her faded wedding-dress. She still had the withered flowers in her hair, although her hair was whiter than the dress itself. For the dress was yellow with age, and everything she wore had long since lost its lustre. 'I saw, too,' says Pip, 'that the bride within the bridal-dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure, upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone. Once I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible personage lying in state. Once I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me.' Poor Pip! And poor Miss Havisham! Miss Havisham had lost her fish just as she was in the very act of landing him. And she had let it sour and spoil her, and Pip was frightened at the havoc it had wrought.

The peril touches life at every point. It especially affects those of us who are called to be fishers of

men. It is a great art, this human angling, and needs infinite tact, and infinite subtilty, and infinite patience. And, above all, it needs a resolute determination never on any account whatever to be soured by disappointment. When I am tempted to wind up my line, and give the whole thing up in despair, I revive my flagging enthusiasm by recalling the rapture of my earlier catches. What angler ever forgets the wild transport of landing his first salmon? What minister ever forgets the spot on which he knelt with his first convert? In the long and tedious hours when the waiting is weary, and the nibblings vexatious, and the bites disappointing, let him live on these wealthy memories as the bees ive in the winter on the honey that they gathered in the summer-time. Yes, let him think about those unforgettable triumphs, and let him talk about them. They make great talking. And as he recalls and recites the thrilling story, the leaden moments will simply fly, the old glow will steal back into his fainting soul, and, long before he has finished his tale, he will find his fingers busy with another glorious prize.

## V

## LANDLORD AND TENANT

I HEARD a capital story the other evening under the most astonishing circumstances. It was at a public meeting connected with a religious conference. A certain minister rose to address us. We knew from past experience that we should have a most suggestive and stimulating address. But, somehow, it did not occur to us that we should be favoured with a story. And when this grave and sedate member of our assembly suddenly launched out into the intricacies of his tale, it was as great a surprise as though the haildrops turned out to be diamonds, or Vesuvius had begun to pour forth gold. Before we knew what had happened, we were electrified by the story of a man who dwelt in a very comfortable house, with a large, light, airy cellar. The river ran near by. One day the river overflowed, the cellar was flooded, and all the hens that he kept in it were drowned. The next day he bounced off to see the landlord.

'I have come,' he said, 'to give you notice. I wish to leave the house.'

'How is that?' asked the astonished landlord. 'I thought you liked it so much. It is a very comfortable, well-built house, and cheap.'

'Oh, yes,' the tenant replied, 'but the river has overflowed into my cellar, and all my hens are drowned.'

'Oh, don't let that make you give up the house,' the landlord reasoned; '*try ducks!*'

I entirely forget—I most fervently hope that my friend will never see this lamentable confession of mine!—I entirely forget what he made of this delightful story. But, looking back on it now, I can see quite clearly that half the philosophy of life is wrapped up in its delicious folds. It raises the question at the very outset as to how far I am under any obligation to endure the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The river has flooded my cellar and drowned all my hens. Very well. Now two courses are open to me. Shall I grin and bear it? or shall I make a change? I must remember that it is very nice living on the banks of the river. There is the boat-house at the foot of the garden. What delightful hours we have spent gliding up and down the bends and reaches of the tranquil stream, watching the reflections in the water, and picnicking under the willows on its grassy banks! How the

children love to come down here and feed the swans as the graceful creatures glide proudly hither and thither, seeming to be conscious that their beauty richly deserves all the homage that is paid to it! The fishing, too! The whirr of the line, and the bend of the rod, and the splash of the trout; why, there was more concentrated excitement in some of those tremendous moments than in all the politics and battles since the world began! And the bathing! On those hot summer days when the very air seemed to scorch the skin, how exquisite those swirling waters seemed! Am I to give up all this enjoyment because, once in five years perhaps, the swollen stream floods my cellar and drowns my hens? That is the question, and it is a live question too.

Now the trouble is a little deeper than appears on the surface. For if I persuade myself that it is my duty to bounce off down to the owner of the house and give him notice to quit, I shall soon find myself spending a considerable proportion of my time in waiting upon my landlords. In the next house to which I go I shall not only miss the boating and fishing and bathing, but I shall within six months discover other disadvantages quite as grave as the occasional flooding of my riverside cellar. And then I shall have to move again. And moving will become a habit with me. And, on the whole, it is a bad habit. It may be good for the hens; but there

are other things to be considered besides hens. The solar system is not kept in operation solely for the benefit of the hens in the cellar. There are the children, and, with all respect for the fowl-yard, children are as much worthy of consideration as chickens. It is not good for children to be everlastingly moving. It is good for them to have sacred and beautiful memories of the home of their childhood. It is good for them to feed the swans, and play under the willows, year in and year out, and to retain the swans and the willows as part of the background with which memory will always paint the picture of their infancy. It is good for children to feel a certain fixity and stability about home and school and friends.

George Gissing pathetically tells how the spirit of dereliction stole into the life of Godwin Peak. It was all owing to the family gipsyings. 'As a result of the family's removal first from London to the farm, and then into Twybridge, Godwin had no friends of old standing. A boy reaps advantage from the half-parental kindness of men and women who have watched his growth from infancy; in general it affects him as a steadying influence, keeping before his mind the social bonds to which his behaviour owes allegiance. Godwin had no ties which bound him strongly to any district.' He was like a ship that belongs to no port in particular, and that

drifts hither and thither about the world as fugitive commissions may arise.

The finest of all the fine arts is the art of putting up with nasty things. It is not very nice to have all your hens drowned. You get fond of hens. And apart from the financial loss involved, there is a sense of bereavement in seeing all your choice Dorkings, your favourite Leghorns, your lovely Orpingtons, or your beautiful Silver Wyandottes all lying dead and bedraggled in the muddy cellar. Few things are more disconcerting. And yet I am writing this article for no other purpose than to assert that the best thing to do, if you must have hens, is to bury these as quickly as possible and send down to the market for a fresh supply. It is certainly gratifying to one's pride as a tenant to feel that one has a grievance and can now show his glorious independence of the landlord. There is always a pleasurable piquancy in being able to resign, or dismiss somebody, or give notice. But my interest is every bit as well worth considering as my dignity. And whilst my dignity clamours to get even with the landlord, my interest reminds me of the swans and the willows, the boating and the fishing. My dignity shouts angrily about my dead hens; but my interest whispers significantly about my living children. So that, all things considered, it is better to bury the hens and the hatchet at the same

time. I may quit my riverside residence and have a waterproof fowl-run in another street; but when I see somebody else taking his children out in my old boat, I shall only bite my lip and wish that I had quietly restocked my chicken-run. It may be a most iniquitous proceeding on the part of the landlord to allow the river to flood my cellar but, thinking it over calmly, I am convinced that it is my duty as a Christian to forgive him. And it always pays a man to do his duty.

I had thought of devoting a paragraph to ministers and deacons. But perhaps I had better not. These matters are very intricate and very delicate, and need a tenderer touch than mine. Things will sometimes go wrong. The river will rise. The cellar gets flooded, and the hens get drowned. But, really, I am certain that, nine times out of ten, perhaps ninety-nine times out of a hundred, it is better to bury the poor birds quietly and say no more about it. I don't know quite how to apply this parable. I was afraid I should get out of my depth if I ventured into such matters. But suppose that the minister finds some morning that his cellar is flooded and his pet birds drowned. Of course, it is pleasant to send in your resignation and say that you will not stand it. And yet, and yet—rivers will rise; it is a way that rivers have; and the Church Secretary, when he receives the

resignation, feels as helpless as the landlord. And has the minister any guarantee that the next river on the banks of which he builds his nest will never rise? And, even if he is certain of perfection in the fields to which he flies, is he quite justified in avenging his dead hens by imperilling his living children and his living church?

Or perhaps I have misinterpreted the story. I am really very nervous about it, and feel that I have plunged into things too high for me. Perhaps the minister is the landlord. It is through his wickedness that the river has risen and drowned some of the Church's best hens, or at least ruffled the fine feathers of some of the Church's best birds. It is the easiest thing in the world to give him notice to quit. And it accords magnificently with the dignity of the situation. But are we quite sure that the poor minister made the river rise? That is the question the tenant ought to consider. Was it the landlord's fault? I repeat that rivers will rise at times, generally at storm times. The Nile and the Tigris used to rise in prehistoric times. It is a way rivers have. I really think that it will be as well to say no more about it. Try to smooth down the ruffled feathers and forget. It may not have been his fault; and, anyhow, we shall be saying good-bye to a good many delightful experiences if we part company.

And, really, when you think it over quietly, there seems to be a great deal in the landlord's suggestion: 'Try ducks!' Of course, ducks are the very thing for a riverside dwelling. Every change, however small, should be dictated by reason and not by caprice. This was the essential difference between the stupid tenant and the wise landlord. The tenant said, 'I will make a *fundamental* change, and I will make it *capriciously*—I will leave the house!' The landlord said, 'Why not make an *incidental* change, and make it *reasonably*? Try ducks!' I have in my time seen great numbers of people, among all kinds and conditions of men, throw up their riverside dwellings in high dudgeon because their hens were drowned in the cellar. But among my saddest letters I find some from those who tell me how they miss the swans and the boat-house, the trout and the willows, and how sincerely they wish now that they had tried ducks. But it is too late; the flashing stream is the paradise of other tenants; and the children's most romantic memory of childhood twines itself about the fun of getting the piano and the dining-room table in and out of the different doors. We may easily form a stupid habit of giving the landlord notice whenever the river happens to rise; and we forget that it is from just such movements—such goings and such stayings—that life as a whole takes its tint and colour.

Destiny is made of trifles. Our weal and our woe are determined by comparatively insignificant issues. Somebody has finely said that we make our decisions, and then our decisions turn round and make us.

Now let nobody suppose that I am deprecating a change. On the contrary, I am advocating a change. It will never do to let the fowls drown, and to take no steps to prevent a recurrence of any such disaster. I hold no brief for stagnation. I am merely insisting that the change must commend itself to heart and conscience and reason. It must be a forward move. Look at this, for example. It is from Stanley's *Life of Arnold*: 'We are all in the midst of confusion,' Arnold writes from Laleham, 'the books all packed and half the furniture; and on Tuesday, if God will, we shall leave this dear place, this nine-years' home of such exceeding happiness. But it boots not to look backwards. Forward, forward, *forward*, should be one's motto.' And thus Arnold moved to Rugby, and made history! There are times when the landlord's gate is the high-road to glory.

The whole matter is capable of the widest application, and must be scientifically treated. Man is always finding his fowls drowned in the cellar and going the wrong way to put things right. Generally speaking, it must be confessed that he is too fond of rushing off to the landlord. In his *Travels in Russia*,

Theophile Gautier has a striking word concerning this perilous proclivity. 'Whatever is of real use to man,' he says, 'was invented from the beginning of the world, and all the people who have come along since have worn their brains out to find something new, but have made no improvements. *Change is far from being progress;* it is not yet proved that steamers are better than sailing-vessels, or railways than horse traffic. For my part, I believe that men will end in returning to the old methods, which are always the best.' I do not agree with the first part of Gautier's statement. It is not likely. But when he says that we are getting back to our starting-point, his contention is indisputable. In the beginning, man was alone with his earth; and all that he did, he did in the sweat of his brow. Then came the craze for machinery, and the world became a network of wires and a wilderness of whirling wheels. But we are beginning to recognize that it has been a ridiculous mistake. The thing is too clumsy and too complicated. Mr. Marconi has already taught us to feel half ashamed of the wires. And Mr. H. G. Wells predicts that in forty years' time all the activities of a larger and busier world will be driven by invisible currents of power, and the whole of our industrial machinery will have gone to the scrap-heap. Man will find himself once more alone with his world, but it will be a world that has

taken him into its confidence and revealed to him its wonderful secrets. He will look back with a smile on the age of screaming syrens and snorting engines, of racing pistons and whirling wheels. He will be amazed at his own earlier readiness to resort to such a cumbrous and complicated system when a smaller transition would have ushered him into his kingdom.

The whole drift of our modern scientific development is away from our clinking mechanical complexities and back towards the great primal simplicities. We have been too fond of the drastic and dramatic course, too fond of bouncing off to the landlord. We are too apt to involve ourselves in a big move when we might have gained our point by simply trying ducks. We love the things that are burdensome, the ways that are involved, the paths that lead to headache and heartache. It is a very ancient and very human tendency. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians to reprove in them the same sad blunder. 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?' They had abandoned the simplicities under the lure of the complexities. The Church that was urged by her Lord to return to her first love had made the same mistake. We are too prone to scorn the simple and the obvious. We forsake the fountain of living water, and hew out to ourselves clumsy cisterns. We neglect the

majestic simplicities of the gospel, and involve our tired brains and hungry hearts in tortuous systems that lead us a long, long way from home. The landlord is right. The simplest course is almost always the safest.

## VI

## THE CORNER CUPBOARD

Is there a case on record of a really unsuccessful search? I doubt it. I believe it to be positively and literally true that he that seeketh, findeth. I do not mean that a man will always find what he seeks. I do not know that the promise implies that. I fancy it covers a far wider range, and embraces a much ampler truth. Yes, I doubt if any man ever yet sought without finding. When I was a boy I lost my peg-top. It was a somewhat expensive one, owing partly to the fact that it would really spin. I noticed this peculiarity about it whilst it was still the property of its previous possessor. I had several tops; indeed, my pockets bulged out with my ample store, but none of them would spin. After pointing out to the owner of the coveted top the frightful unsightliness of his treasure, and in other ways seeking to lower the price likely to be demanded as soon as negotiations opened, I at length secured the top in return for six marbles.

a redoubtable horse chestnut, and a knife with a broken blade. My subsequent alarm, on missing so costly a possession, can be readily imagined. I could not be expected to endure so serious a deprivation without making a desperate effort to retrieve my fallen fortunes. I therefore proclaimed to all and sundry my inflexible determination to ransack the house from the top brick of the chimney to the darkest recesses of the cellar in quest of my vanished treasure. I began with a queer old triangular cupboard that occupied one corner of the kitchen. And in the deepest and dustiest corner of the top shelf of that cavernous old cupboard, what should I find but the cricket ball that I had lost the previous summer? My excitement was so great that I almost fell off the table on which I was standing. As soon as the flicker of my candle fell on the ball I distinctly remembered putting it there. I argued that it was the only place in the house that I could reach, and that my brother couldn't, and consequently the only place in the house that was really safe. The fact that the ball had remained there, untouched, all through the cricket season abundantly demonstrated the justice of my conclusion. My jubilation was so exuberant that it drove all thought of the peg-top out of my mind. There is such a thing as the expulsive power of an old affection as well as the expulsive power of a new affection.

My delight over my new-found cricket ball entirely dispelled my grief over my missing peg-top. Indeed, I am not sure to this day whether I ever saw that peg-top again. I may have inadvertently deposited it on a shelf that my brother could reach ; but after the lapse of so many years I will endeavour to harbour no dark suspicions. In any case, it does not matter. What is a paltry peg-top compared with a half-guinea cricket ball? I had sought, and I had found. I had not found what I had sought, nor had I sought what I had found. Perhaps if I had continued my search for the peg-top with the enthusiasm and assiduity with which I had lugged the kitchen table up to the corner cupboard, I should have found it. Perhaps if I had searched for the cricket ball with the same zest that marked my quest of the peg-top, I should have found it. But that is not my point. My point is the point with which I set out. I do not believe that a case of a really unsuccessful search has ever been recorded. He that seeketh, findeth, depend upon it.

The days of the peg-top and the cricket ball seem a long way behind me now, and I am glad that the fate of the queer old corner cupboard has been mercifully hidden from my eyes. But, by sea and land, the principle that I first discovered when I stood on tiptoe on the kitchen table has followed me all down the years. The secret that I learned that day

has acted like a talisman, and has turned every spot that I have visited into an enchanted ground. Even my study table is not immune from its magic spell. A more prosaic spectacle never met the eye. The desk, the pigeon-holes, the drawers, and the piles of papers might have to do with a foundry or a fish-market, so very unromantic do they appear. And yet, what times I have whenever I manage to lose something! It is almost worth while losing something just for the fun of looking for it! If a catalogue or a circular will only go astray, all the excitements of a chase lie open before me. And the things that I shall find! I shall come on letters that will make me laugh and letters that will make me cry. Hullo, what's this? Dear me, I must write to so-and-so, or he will think I have forgotten him! And just look here! I must run round and see what's-his-name this afternoon, and fix this matter up. And so I go on. The probability is that I shall no more find the catalogue that set me searching than I found the peg-top in the days of auld lang syne; but what has that to do with it? Look at the things I have found, the memories I have revived, the tasks that have been suggested! Life has been incalculably enriched by the fruits of this search through the papers on my study table. If I do not find the peg-top-papers for which I sought, I have found cricket-ball-papers immensely more

valuable, and the rapture of my sensational discoveries renders the fate of my poor peg-top-papers a matter of comparative indifference. The series of thrills produced by such a search is reminiscent of the emotions with which I enjoyed my first magic-lantern entertainment. On they came, one after another, those wonderful, wonderful pictures in the darkness. On they came, one after another, these startling surprises from out these musty-fusty piles of papers. A search is really a marvellous experience. The imagination flies with lightning rapidity from one world of things to another and another as the papers rustle between the fingers. John Ploughman used to say that, even if the fowls got nothing by it, it did them good to scratch. I am not a poultry expert, as I am frequently reminded, but I dare say that there is a wealth of wisdom in the observation. At any rate, I know that, in my own case, the success or failure of my search expeditions stand in no way related to the original object of my quest. I never remember having set out to look for a thing, and afterwards regretted having done so.

I was wondering the other day if the same principle applied to other people, and I cruelly determined on a little experiment. My girls collect orchids, and much of their time in the city is spent in recounting the foraging expeditions that they have

conducted in happy days gone by, and in anticipating similar adventures in the golden times before them. Some of the pleasantest holidays that we have enjoyed together have been spent away in the heart of the bush where Nature runs riot and revels in undisturbed profusion. It is delightful to see them come traipsing along the track through the bush, their faces flushed with the excitement of their foray, and their arms filled with the booty they have gathered. They are tired, evidently, but not too tired to run when they catch sight of us. 'Look at this!' cries one; and 'Isn't that a pretty colour?' asks the other. 'Did you ever see one that shape before?' 'Fancy finding one of these!' And so on. And then the evening is spent in pressing and classifying the treasures they have gathered.

One day they came back, earlier than usual, and showed us their discoveries.

'But, oh, father, it was an awful shame! You know that kind that Ella Simpson showed us once, and told us they were very rare? Well, we found one of those, a real beauty, away over in that valley beyond the sandhills; and on the way home we lost it. Wasn't it a pity?'

'Do you mean the little pale blue one, with the orange fringe?' I inquired.

'Yes, and it was just in full flower, and ready for picking.'

'It was a pity,' I confessed, 'for, do you know I specially want one of those. Do you think you could go back and try hard to find one?'

They agreed. I advised them to search with the greatest care, and to poke into places that they had not disturbed before. They returned an hour later with no further specimen of the blue and orange variety, although on a subsequent date they succeeded in unearthing one, but they were rejoicing over a number of very rare specimens that are now considered among the most valuable in their collection.

In *It is Never Too Late to Mend*, Charles Reade has a story that is right into our hands just here. 'Once upon a time,' he makes one of his characters say, 'once upon a time there was an old chap who had heard about treasure being found in odd places, a pot full of guineas or something; and it took root in his heart. One morning he comes down and says to his wife, "It is all right, old woman; I've found the treasure!" "No, have you, though?" says she. "Yes," says he; "leastways, it is as good as found; it is only waiting till I've had my breakfast, and then I'll go out and fetch it in!" "La, John, but how did you find it!" "It was revealed to me in a dream," says John, as grave as a judge; "it is under a tree in the orchard." After breakfast they went to the plantation, but John could not again recognize the tree. "Drat your stupid old

head," cried his wife, "why didn't you put a nick on the right one at the time?" But John was not to be beaten. He resolved to dig under every tree. How the neighbours laughed! But springtime came. Out burst the trees. "Wife," says he, "our bloom is richer than I have known it this many a year; it is richer than our neighbours'!" Bloom dies, and then out come about a million little green things quite hard. In the autumn the old trees were staggering, and the branches down to the ground with the crop; and so the next year, and the next; sometimes more, sometimes less, according to the year. The trees were old, and wanted a change. His letting in the air to them, and turning the subsoil up to the frost and sun, had renewed their youth.' And so poor John found his treasure. It was not exactly the pot of guineas that he sought; but it was just as valuable, and probably afforded him a deeper gratification. He did not find what he sought, but who shall say that his search was unsuccessful? He that seeketh, findeth. There is no case on record of a really fruitless search.

Mr. Gilbert West and Lord Lyttelton once undertook to organize a campaign to expose the fictitious character of the biblical narrative. In order to make their attack the more damaging and the more effective they agreed to specialize. Mr. West promised to study thoroughly the story of the

Resurrection of Jesus. Lord Lyttelton selected as the point of his assault the record of the conversion of Paul. They separated; and each began a careful and exhaustive search for inaccuracies, incongruities, and contradictions in the documents. They were engaged in exposing error, they said, and in searching after truth. Yes, they were searching after truth, and they sought with earnestness and sincerity. They were searching after truth, and they found it. For when, at the appointed time, they met to arrange the details of their projected campaign, each had to confess to the other that he had become convinced of the authenticity of the records and had yielded to the claims of Christ! Here was a search! Here was a find! They sought what they never found, and they found what they never sought. Was the search unsuccessful? Seekers after truth, they called themselves; and did they not find the Truth? Like the Magi, they followed a star in the firmament with which they were familiar. But, to their amazement, the star led them to the Saviour, and neither of them ever regretted participating in so astonishing a quest.

'And thus,' as Oliver Cromwell finely says, 'to be a seeker is to be of the best sect next to a finder, and such an one shall every faithful humble seeker be at the end.' It always seems to me that the old Puritan's lovely letter to his daughter, the letter

from which I have just quoted, is the gem of Carlyle's great volume. Bridget was twenty-two at the time. 'Your sister,' her father tells her, 'is exercised with some perplexed thoughts. She sees her own vanity and carnal mind, and, bewailing it, she seeks after what will satisfy. And thus to be a seeker is to be of the best sect next to a finder, and such an one shall every faithful humble seeker be at the end. Happy seeker; happy finder! Dear heart, press on! Let not husband, let not anything, cool thy affections after Christ!'

With which strong, tender, fatherly words from an old soldier to his young daughter we may very well take leave of the subject. 'Happy seeker; happy finder! Dear heart, press on!' Oliver Cromwell knew that there is no such thing as a fruitless search. If we do not come upon our shining treasure in the exact form that our ignorance had fancied, we discover it after a similitude that a much higher wisdom has ordained. But the point is that we do find it. That was the lesson that I learned as I peered into the abysmal darkness of the mysterious old cupboard in my childhood, and the longer I live the more certain I become of its truth.

## VII

## WITH THE WOLVES IN THE WILD

### I

I LIKE to think that Jesus spent forty nights of His wondrous life out in the Wild with the wolves. 'He was with the wild beasts,' Mark tells us, and the statement is not recorded for nothing. Night is the great leveller. Desert and prairie are indistinguishable in the night. Night folds everything in sable robes, and the loveliest landscape is one with the dreariest prospect. North and South, East and West, are all alike in the night. Here is the Wild of the West. 'A vast silence reigned,' Jack London tells us. 'The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness. There was a hint in it of laughter — the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of eternity laughing at the futility of life and the effort of life. It was the Wild—the savage,

frozen-hearted Northern Wild!' Here, I say, is the Wild. And here is the life of the Wild:

'Bill opened his mouth to speak, but changed his mind. Instead, he pointed towards the wall of darkness that pressed about them from every side. There was no suggestion of form in the utter blackness; only could be seen a pair of eyes gleaming like live coals. Henry indicated with his hand a second pair and a third. A circle of the gleaming eyes had drawn about their camp. Now and again a pair of eyes moved, or disappeared to appear again a moment later.'

What did it mean—those restless flashing eyes, like fireflies breaking across the surface of the darkness? It simply meant that they were in the Wild at night, and they were with the wild beasts. And what does it mean, this vivid fragment from my Bible? It means that *He* was in the Wild at night, night after night for forty nights, and *He* was with the wild beasts. He heard the roar of the lion as it awoke the echoes of the slumbering forest. He saw the hyena pass stealthily near Him in the track of a timid deer, and watched the cheetah prowl through the brushwood in pursuit of a young gazelle. He heard the squeal of the hare as the crouching fox sprang out; and the flutter of the partridge as the jackal seized its prey. He heard the slither of the viper

as it glided through the grass beside His head; and was startled by the shrieking of the nightbirds, and the flapping of their wings, as they whirled and swooped about Him. And He too saw the gleaming eyes of the hungry wolves as they drew their fierce cordon around Him. For He was out in the Wild for forty nights, and He was with the wild beasts.

II

And yet He was unhurt! Now why was He unharmed those forty nights with the scrub around Him alive with claws and talons and fangs? He was with the wild beasts, Mark tells us, and yet no lion sprang upon Him; no lone wolf slashed at Him with her frightful fangs; no serpent bit Him.

'Henry,' said one of Jack London's heroes to the other, as they watched the wolfish eyes flashing hither and thither in the darkness, 'it's an awful misfortune to be out of ammunition!'

But *He* was unarmed and unprotected! No blade was in His hand; no ring of fire blazed round about Him to affright the prowling brutes. And yet He was unharmed! Not a tooth nor a claw left scratch or gash upon Him! Why was it? It will never do to fall back upon the miraculous, for the

very point of the story of the Temptation is His sublime refusal to sustain Himself by superhuman aid. By the employment of miracle He could easily have commanded the stones to become bread, and He might thus have grandly answered the taunt of the Tempter and have appeased the gnawings of His body's hunger at one and the same time. But it would have spoiled everything. He went into the Wild to be tempted 'like as we are tempted'; and since miracle is not at *our* disposal He would not let it be at *His*. It is impossible, therefore, to suppose that He scorned the aid of miracle to protect Him from hunger, but called in the aid of miracle to protect Him from the beasts.

Now in order to solve this problem I turned to my Bible, beginning at the very beginning. And there, in the very first chapter, I found the explanation. 'Have dominion,' God said, 'over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.' There was nothing really miraculous in Christ's authority over the fish. I never see a man dangling with a line without a sigh for our lost dominion. There was nothing really miraculous in Christ's immunity from harm. The wolves did not tear Him; He told them not to do so. He was a man, just such a man as God

meant all men to be. And therefore He 'had dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth.' He was unscathed in the midst of the wolves, not because He was superhuman, but because He was truly human. We are something less than human, the wrecks and shadows of men. Having forfeited the authority of our humanity, the fish no longer obey us, and we have perforce to dangle for them with hooks and strings. The wolves and the tigers no longer stand off at our command, and we have to fall back upon camp-fires and pistols. It is very humiliating! The crown is fallen from our heads, and all things finned and furred and feathered mock us in our shame. But Thine, O Man of men, is the power and the dominion, and all the creatures of the Wild obey Thee! 'He was with the wild beasts.'

## III

What did those wild, dumb, eloquent eyes say to Jesus as they looked wonderingly at Him out there in the Wild? As they bounded out of the thicket, crouched, stared at Him, and slunk away, what did they say to Him, those great lean wolves? And what did He say to them? Animals are such

eloquent things, especially at such times. 'The foxes have holes,' Jesus said, long afterwards, remembering as He said it how He watched the creatures of the Wild seek out their lairs. 'And the birds of the air have nests,' He said, remembering the twittering and fluttering in the boughs above His head as the feathered things settled down for the night. 'But the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head,' He concluded, as He thought of those long, long nights in the homeless Wild. Did He mean that the wolves were better off than He was? We are all tempted to think so when the conflict is pressing too hardly upon us. There seems to be less choice, and therefore less responsibility, among the beasts of the field; less play of right and wrong. 'I think,' said Walt Whitman—

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained;
I stand and look at them sometimes an hour at a stretch.
They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole earth.

Was some flitting, hovering thought like this part of the Temptation in the Wild? Is that

what Mark means when he says so significantly that 'He was with the wild beasts'? Surely; for He was tempted in *all* points like as we are, and we have all been tempted in this. 'Good old Carlo!' we have said, as we patted the dog's head, looking down out of our eyes of anguish into his calm, impassive gaze. 'Good old Carlo, you don't know anything of such struggles, old boy!' And we have fancied for a moment that Carlo had the best of it. It was a black and blasphemous thought, and He struck it away, as we should strike at a hawk that fluttered in front of our faces and threatened to pick at our eyes. But for one moment it hovered before Him, and He caught its ugly glance. It is a *very* ugly glance. Our capacity for great inward strife and for great inward suffering is the one proof we have that we were made in the image of God.

## IV

Was He thinking, I wonder, when He went out to the wolves in the Wild of those who, before so very long, would be torn to pieces by hungry beasts for His dear sake?

'To-day,' said Amplonius, a teacher of the persecuted Roman Christians, 'to-day, by the cruel order of Trajan, Ignatius was thrown to the

wild beasts in the arena. He it was, my children, whom Jesus took, when as yet he was but a little child, and set him in the midst of the disciples and said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." And now, from the same Lord who that day laid His sacred hands upon his head, he has received the martyr crown. But Ignatius did not fear the beasts, my children. I have seen a letter which he wrote but yesterday to the aged Polycarp, the angel of the Church of Smyrna. In it he says that the hungry creatures have no terrors for him. "Would to God," he said, "that I were come to the beasts prepared for me. I wish that, with their gaping mouths, they were now ready to rush upon me. Let the angry beasts tear asunder my members so that I may win Christ Jesus." Thus Ignatius wrote but yesterday to the beloved Polycarp; and to-day, with a face like the face of an angel, he gave himself to the wolves. We know not which of us shall suffer next, my children. The people are still crying wildly, "The Christians to the lions!" It may be that I, your teacher, shall be the next to witness for the faith. But let us remember that for forty days and forty nights Jesus was Himself with the wild beasts, and not one of them durst harm Him. And He is still with the wild beasts wherever we

His people, are among them; and their crue fangs can only tear us so far as it is for our triumph and His glory.' So spake Amplonius, and the Church was comforted.

And at this hour there is, in the catacomb at St. Callixtus, at Rome, a rude old picture of Jesus among the untamed creatures of the Wild. The thought that lions and leopards crouched at His feet in the days of His flesh, and were subject unto Him, was very precious to the hunted and suffering people.

## V

Sometimes, too, I fancy that He saw, in these savage brutes that harmed Him not, a symbol and a prophecy of His own great conquest. For they, with their hateful fangs and blooded talons, were part of His vast constituency. 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together,' Paul declares. Richard Jefferies pointed to a quaint little English cottage beside a glorious bank of violets. But he could never bring himself to pluck the fragrant blossoms, for, in the cottage, the dreaded small-pox had once raged. 'It seemed,' says Jefferies, 'to quite spoil the violet bank. There is something in disease so destructive, as it were, to flowers.' And as the violets shared

the scourge, so the creatures shared the curse. And as they stared dumbly into the eyes of the Son of God they seemed to half understand that their redemption was drawing nigh. 'In Nature herself,' as Longfellow says, 'there is a waiting and hoping, a looking and yearning, after an unknown something. Yes, when above there, on the mountain, the lonely eagle looks forth into the grey dawn to see if the day comes not; when by the mountain torrent the brooding raven listens to hear if the chamois is returning from his nightly pasture in the valley; and when the rising sun calls out the spicy odours of the Alpine flowers, then there awake in Nature an expectation and a longing for a future revelation of God's majesty.' Did He see this brooding sense of expectancy in the fierce eyes about Him? And did He rejoice that the hope of the Wild would in Him be gloriously fulfilled? Who knows?

In his *Cloister and the Hearth*, Charles Reade tells of the temptation and triumph of Clement the hermit. 'And one keen frosty night, as he sang the praises of God to his tuneful psaltery, and his hollow cave rang with his holy melody, he heard a clear whine, not unmelodious. It became louder. He peeped through the chinks of his rude door, and there sat a great red wolf moaning melodiously with his nose high in the

air! Clement was delighted. "My sins are going," he cried, "and the creatures of God are owning me!" And in a burst of enthusiasm he sang:

> Praise Him, all ye creatures of His!
> Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!

And all the time he sang the wolf bayed at intervals.' Did Jesus, I wonder, see the going of the world's sin and the departure of its primal curse in the faces of the wild things that howled and roared around Him? As the fierce things prowled around Him and left Him unharmed, did He see a symbol of His final subjugation of all earth's savage and restless elements? Who shall say?

## VI

'He was with the wild beasts,' says Mark, 'and the angels ministered unto Him.' Life always hovers between the beasts and the angels; and however wolfish may be the eyes that affright us in the day of our temptation, we may be sure that our solitary struggle is watched by invisible spectators, and that, after the baying of the beasts, we shall hear the angels sing.

## VIII

## DICK SUNSHINE

DICK SUNSHINE was not his real name; at least so they said. But the thing that they called his real name did not describe him a scrap; it seemed to abandon all attempt at description as hopelessly impossible; but when you called him Dick Sunshine it fitted him like a glove. That is the immense advantage that nicknames possess over real names. Of all real things, real names are the most unreal. There is no life in them. They stand for nothing; they express nothing; they reveal nothing. They bear no kind of relationship to the unfortunate individuals who are sentenced to wear them, like meaningless badges, for the term of their natural lives. But nicknames, on the other hand, sparkle and flash; they bring the man himself vividly and palpitatingly before you; and without more introduction or ado, you know him at once for what he is. That is the reason why we prefer to be called by our real names. We know in our secret souls that our nicknames are

our true names, and that our real names are mere tags and badges; but we prefer the meaningless tag to the too candid truth. There are obvious disadvantages in being constantly spoken of as Mr. Grump, Mrs. Crosspatch, or Miss Spitfire; whereas Mr. Smith, Mrs. Robinson, or Miss Jones are much safer and more non-committal. But, for all that, the nicknames, depend upon it, are the true names. Nicknames reveal the man; real names conceal the man. And since, in the case of my present hero, I desire to reveal everything and to conceal nothing, it is obviously desirable to speak of him by his nickname, which is his true name, rather than by his real name, which is a mere affectation and artificiality. He was always Dick Sunshine to me, and I noticed that the children always called him Dick Sunshine, and children are not easily deceived. Besides, he *was* Dick Sunshine, so what is the use of beating about the bush?

Who was Dick Sunshine? It is difficult to say. He was partly a grocer and party a consumptive. He spent half his time laughing, and half his time coughing. He only stopped laughing in order to cough; and he only stopped coughing in order to laugh. You could always tell which he was doing at any particular time by taking a glance at the shop. If the shop was open, you knew that Dick was behind the counter laughing If it was closed, you knew

that he was in bed coughing. A fine-looking fellow was Dick, or would have been if only his health had given him a chance. Fine wavy golden hair tossed in naïve disorder about his lofty forehead; and a small pointed golden beard set off a frank, cheery, open face. Somehow or other, there was a certain touch of chivalry about Dick, although it is not easy to say exactly how it made itself felt. It was a certain knightly bearing, perhaps, a haughty contempt for his own suffering, a rollicking but resolute refusal of anything in the shape of pity. Coughing or laughing, there was always a roguish little twinkle in the corner of his eye, a kind of danger signal that kept you on constant guard lest his next sally should take you by surprise.

The church at North-East Valley has had its ups and downs, like most churches, but as long as Dick was its secretary it never had a gloomy church meeting. However grave or unexpected might be the crisis, he came up smiling, and greeted the unseen with a cheer. When things were going well, he always made the most of it, and drew attention to the encouraging features in the church's outlook. If things were so-so, he pointed out that they might have been a great deal worse, and that the church was putting up a brave fight against heavy odds If anybody criticized the minister, Dick was on his feet in a minute. Could the minister do everything?

Dick wanted to know. Was he solely responsible for the unsatisfactory conditions? Why, anybody who watches the minister can see that the poor man is doing his best, which, Dick slyly added, is more than can be said for some of us! And the ministers of North-East Valley used to tell me that when they themselves got down in the dumps, Dick treated their collapse as a glorious joke. He would come down to the Manse and laugh until he coughed, and cough until he could laugh again, and, by the time that he stopped laughing and coughing, the masses of his golden hair were tumbled about his high forehead like shocks of corn blown from the stooks by playful winds in harvest-time; and when he went home to finish his coughing, the Manse was flooded with the laughter and the sunshine that he had left behind him.

I was sitting one morning in my study at Mosgiel, when there came a ring at the front door bell. On answering it, I found myself standing face to face with Dick. He was laughing so violently that he could at first scarcely salute me. He followed me into the study, and assured me as he sank into a chair that it was the fun of the world. I asked him to explain the cause of his boisterous merriment.

'Had to give it up!' he gasped. 'The doctors told me that I should die in a week if I remained in the shop any longer. So I've left it to look after

itself, and come away. No fun in dying in a week, you know!'

I admitted that there was something in that, and inquired what he was going to do now.

'That's the joke!' he roared, between laughter and coughing. 'I've come to stay with you.'

There was nothing for it but to let him take his time, so I patiently awaited further explanation. At length it came.

'Just as I was locking up the shop,' he said, presently, 'I heard that the temperance people wanted a lecturer and organizer to work this district. Except the lecturing, it will be all open-air work, so I applied for it, and got it!'

'But, my dear fellow,' I remonstrated, 'I never knew that you could lecture. Why, outside the church meeting, you never made a speech in your life!'

'That's part of the joke!' he cried, going off again into a paroxysm of laughter. 'But I told them that you would help me at the first, and they appointed me on that condition. So this is to be my head quarters!'

His duties were to commence the following week, and we arranged that he should make his début as a lecturer at a place called Outram, about eight miles across country from Mosgiel. I promised to accompany him, and to fill up such time as he found

it impossible or inconvenient to occupy. In the meantime he got to work with his visiting and organizing. The open air suited him, his health improved amazingly, and the Mosgiel Manse simply rocked under the storms of his boisterous gaiety. Sometimes the shadow of the coming ordeal spread itself heavily over his spirit, and he came to the study with unwonted gravity to ask how this or that point in his maiden effort had better be approached. To prevent his anxiety under this head from becoming too much for his fragile frame, I lent him a book, and sent him out on to the sunlit verandah to read it. It chanced to be *The Old Curiosity Shop*. He had never read anything of Dickens, and it opened a new world to him. I have never seen anybody fall more completely under the spell of the magician. From the study I would hear him suddenly yell with laughter, and come rushing through the hall to read me some passage that had just captivated his fancy. Whenever he came stealing along like a thief, I knew it was to talk about the lecture; when he came like an incarnate thunderstorm, I knew it was about the book.

One passage in the famous story especially appealed to him. It was the part about Codlin and Short, the Punch and Judy men. In the middle of dinner, without the slightest provocation or

warning, he would suddenly drop his knife and fork, throw himself back in his chair, slap his leg a sounding blow with his hand, and shriek out, 'Codlin's your friend, not Short,' and then go off into ecstasies of glee as he told the tale all over again.

Well, Monday—the day of his opening lecture—came at last. During the day he was unusually quiet and taciturn, although, even in face of the grim test that awaited him, the Punch and Judy men haunted his memory and led to occasional subdued outbursts of fun. After tea we set out. It was a delicious evening. Few things are sweeter than the early evenings of early summer. The sunset is throwing long shadows across the fresh green grass, and the birds are busy in the boughs. Everything about us was clad in its softest and loveliest garb. We drove on between massive hedges of fragrant hawthorn, and up huge avenues of stately blue gum trees, scattering the rabbits before us. Then we caught sight of the river, and drove over the bridge into the quiet little town in which such unsuspected adventures awaited us. Dick was pale and quiet; his sunshine was veiled in banks of cloud, and I found it difficult to rouse him. On arrival at the hall we found it crowded. I was naturally delighted; his pleasure was more restrained. Indeed, he confided to me, with a look that, for him, was positively lugubrious, that he

would have been more gratified if the horrid place had been empty. However, there was nothing for it. Not a soul, except myself, knew that Dick was lecturing for the first time in his life; the chairman led us to the platform; and, after a brief introduction relative to the renown of the speakers, he called upon Dick to address the townsfolk. As a maiden effort it was a triumph; his native good humour combined with careful preparation to produce a really excellent effect; and he sat down amidst a thunder of applause. I filled in an odd half-hour, and then the chairman nearly killed Dick at one blow.

'Would anybody in the audience care to ask either of the speakers a question?' he gravely inquired.

Poor Dick was the picture of abject dismay. This was a flank attack for which he was totally unprepared. An elderly gentleman, in the body of the hall, rose slowly, adjusted his spectacles, and, with grave deliberation, announced that he wished to submit a question to the first speaker. Dick looked like a man whose death-warrant was about to be signed. The problem was duly enunciated, and it turned out to be a carefully planned and decidedly awkward one. I wondered how on earth poor Dick would face the music. He paused, as though considering his reply. Then a sudden light

mantled his face. A wicked twinkle sparkled in his eye. He rose smartly, looked straight into the face of his questioner, and exclaimed confidently :

' Codlin's your friend, not Short ! '

The audience was completely mystified. The answer had no more to do with the question than Dutch cheese has to do with the rings of Saturn. For a fraction of a second you could have heard a pin drop. I saw that the only way of saving the situation was by commencing to applaud, and I smote my hands together with a will, and laughed as I have rarely allowed myself to laugh in public. The sympathetic section of the audience followed suit. A general impression seemed to exist that, somehow, Dick had made a particularly clever point The old gentleman who had asked the question was manifestly bewildered ; he gazed helplessly round on his cheering fellow citizens, and evidently regarded the answer as some recondite allusion of which it would never do to display his ignorance. He resumed his seat, discomfited and ashamed. When the applause and laughter had somewhat subsided, I rose and moved a vote of thanks to the chairman, which Dick seconded, though, I fancied, without much show of enthusiasm. Thus the meeting, which Dick never forgot, came to an eminently satisfactory end, although I heard privately long afterwards that, as the people took their homeward

way along those country roads, many who had applauded vigorously inquired confidentially of their neighbours the exact bearing of the cryptic reply on the particular matter in hand.

If Dick lacked laughter on the way across the plains to the meeting, he amply atoned for the deficiency on the way home. How he roared, and yelled, and screamed in his glee !

' I had to say something,' he exclaimed. ' I hadn't the slightest idea what the old gentleman was talking about ; and the only thing I could think of was the Punch and Judy ! '

He laughed and coughed his way through that campaign. Everybody grew wonderfully fond of him, and looked eagerly for his coming. He did a world of good, and shamed scores of us out of the gloom in which we bore our slighter maladies. My mail from New Zealand tells me that, at last, his cough has proved too much for him, so he has given it up. But I like to fancy that, in the land where coughing is no more heard, Dick Sunshine is laughing still.

## IX

## FORTY !

LIFE moves along so smoothly with most of us that there seems to be very little difference between one birthday and another ; but to this rule there is one brilliant and outstanding exception. There is one birthday on which a man should certainly take a holiday, go for a quiet stroll, and indulge in a little serious stock-taking. That birthday is, of course, the fortieth. A man's fortieth birthday is one of the really great days in his life's little story ; and he must make the most of it. I live in a city which boasts a comparatively meagre population. The number of people who reach their fortieth birthday simultaneously must be very small. But in a city of any size some hundreds of people must daily become forty. And if I dwelt in such a place, I should feel tempted to conduct a service every now and again for men and women who were celebrating their fortieth birthday. People so circumstanced, naturally impressed by the dignity and solemnity of the

occasion, would welcome such a service, and the preacher would have a chance of sowing the seed in ground that was well prepared, and of the greatest possible promise. The selection of a text would present no difficulty. I can think of two right off—one in the Old Testament, and one in the New—and there must be scores of others equally appropriate. At forty a man enters upon middle life. What could be more helpful to him, then, than a short inspiring word on such a text as Habakkuk's prayer : *' O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make Thyself known ! '*

I have been recalling, this morning, some painful memories. In my time I have several times known that peculiarly acute species of anguish that only comes to us when we discover a cherished idol in ruins. Men—some of them ministers—upon whose integrity I would cheerfully have staked everything I possessed, suddenly whelmed themselves in shame, and staggered out into the dark. It is an experience that makes a man feel that the very earth is rocking beneath him ; it makes him wonder if it is possible for a good man to be somehow caught in a hot gust of devilry and swept clean off his feet. But the thing that has impressed me as I have counted such names sadly on my fingers is that, without an exception, they were

all in the forties, most of them in the early forties. Youth, of course, often sins, and sins grievously ; but youth recovers itself, and frequently emerges chastened and ennobled by the bitter experience ; but I can recall no instance of a man who fell in the forties and who ever really recovered himself. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. I remember that, some time ago, Sir W. Robertson Nicoll quoted a brilliant essayist as saying that ' the most dangerous years are the forties—the years when men begin to be rich, when they have opportunities of gratifying their passions, when they, perhaps, imagine that they have led a starved and meagre existence.' And so, as I let my mind play about these old and saddening memories, and as I reflect upon the essayist's corroboration of my own conclusion, I fancy I could utter, from the very heart of me, a particularly timely and particularly searching word to those who had just attained their fortieth birthdays. Or, if I felt that the occasion was too solemn for speech, I could at least lead them in prayer. And when I led them in prayer, it would certainly be Habakkuk's prayer : ' O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years ; in the midst of the years make Thyself known ! ' It is a prayer for revival and for revelation.

The real significance of that prayer lies in the

fact that the supreme tendency of middle life is towards prosiness. Young people write poetry and get sentimental: so do old people. But people in the forties—never! A man of forty would as soon be suspected of picking his neighbour's pocket as of writing poetry. He would rather be seen walking down the street without collar or necktie than be seen shedding tears. Ask a company of young people to select some of their favourite hymns or songs. They will at once call for hymns about heaven or songs about love. So will old people. But you will never persuade middle-aged people to sing such songs. They are in the practical or prosy stage of life. The romance of youth has worn off; the romance of age has not arrived. They are between the poetry of the dawn and the poetry of the twilight. And midway between the poetry of the dawn and the poetry of the twilight comes the panting perspiration of noonday. When, therefore, I find myself face to face with my congregation of people who are in the very act of celebrating their fortieth birthday, I shall urge them to pray with the old prophet that, in the midst of the years, the youthful romance of their first faith may be revived within them, and that, in the midst of the years, the revelations that come at eventide may be delightfully anticipated.

I said just now, however, that I had an alternative text from the New Testament. I have an idea that if my first service is a success, I shall hold another ; and, for the sake of variety, I shall address myself to this second theme. Concerning the very first apostolic miracle we are expressly and significantly told that '*the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was showed.*' Now I cannot imagine why that particular is added unless it is to tell those of us who are now 'above forty years old' that we are not beyond the reach of the sensational. We have not outlived the romance of the miraculous. We are not 'too old at forty' to experience all the marvel and the wonder of the grace divine. And, even as I write, I confidently anticipate the sparkle that will light up the eyes of these forty-year-olds as I remind them that that man was above forty years of age upon whom this first triumph of the Church was wrought.

But there are worse things than prosiness. The mere change from the poetry of youth to the prose of middle life need not in itself alarm us. Some of the finest classics in our literature are penned in prose. But within this minor peril lies the germ of a major peril. The trouble is that prosiness may develop into pessimism. And when prosiness curdles into pessimism the case of the patient is very grave. I heard a young fellow in his teens

telling a much older man of his implicit faith in the providence of God. 'Yes,' said the senior, with a sardonic smile, 'I used to talk like that when I was your age!' I heard a young girl telling a woman old enough to be her mother of the rapture of her soul's experience. 'Ah!' replied the elder lady, 'You won't talk like that when you have seen as much of the world as I have!' Here, then, at last we have put our finger on the tragedy that threatens us in the forties. Why is it?

The reason is not far to seek. The fact is that at forty a man must drop something. He has been all his life accumulating until he has become really overloaded. He has maintained his interest in all the things that occupied his attention in youth; and, all the way along the road, fresh claims have been made upon him. His position in the world is a much more responsible one, and makes a greater drain upon his thought and energy. He has married, too, and children have come into his home. There has been struggle and sickness and anxiety. Interests have multiplied, and life has increased in seriousness. But, increasing in seriousness, it must not be allowed to increase in sordidness. A man's life is like a garden. There is a limit to the things that it will grow. You cannot pack plants in a garden as you pack sardines in a tin. That is why the farmer thins out the turnips; that is why the orchardist prunes

his trees ; and that is why the husbandman pinches the grapebuds off the trailing vines. Life has to be similarly treated. At forty a man realizes that his garden is getting overcrowded. It contains all the flowers that he planted in his sentimental youth and all the vegetables that he set there in his prosaic manhood. It is too much. There must be a thinning out. And, unless he is very, very careful, he will find that the thinning-out process will automatically consist of the sacrifice of all the pansies and the retention of all the potatoes.

Now, when I address my congregation of people who are celebrating their fortieth birthday, I shall make a most fervent appeal on behalf of the pansies. Potatoes are excellent things, and the garden becomes distinctly wealthier when, in the twenties and thirties, a man begins to moderate his passion for pansies, and to plant a few potatoes. But a time comes when he must make a stand on behalf of the pansies, or he will have no soul for anything beyond potatoes. Round his potato beds let him jealously retain a border of his finest pansies ; and, depend upon it, when he gets into the fifties and the sixties he will be glad that, all through life, he remained true to the first fondnesses of youth.

Not that he will have to wait for the fifties and the sixties. As soon as a man has faced the situation, taken his stand, and made his decision,

he begins to congratulate himself upon it. That is one of life's most subtle laws. Let us, then, see how it operates in another field. Sir Francis Jeune, the great divorce judge, said that the eighth year was the dangerous year in wedded life. More tragedies occurred in the eighth year than in any other. And Mr. Philip Gibbs has recently written a novel entitled *The Eighth Year*, in which he makes the heroine declare that, in marriage, the eighth year is the fatal year.

'"It's a psychological fact," said Madge. "I work it out in this way. In the first and second years a wife is absorbed in the experiment of marriage and in the sentimental phase of love. In the third and fourth years she begins to study her husband and to find him out. In the fifth and sixth years, having found him out completely, she makes a working compromise with life and tries to make the best of it. In the seventh and eighth years she begins to find out herself. Life has become prosaic. Her home has become a cage to her. In the eighth year she must find a way of escape—anyhow, anywhere. And in the eighth year the one great question is, in what direction will she go? There are many ways of escape."' And so comes the disaster.

All this seems to show that the eighth year of marriage is like the fortieth year of life. It is the year in which husband and wife are called upon to

make their supreme stand on behalf of the pansies. And supposing they do it? Suppose that they make up their minds that everything shall not be sacrificed to potatoes; what follows? Why, to be sure, the best follows. Coventry Patmore, in his *Angel in the House*—the classic of all young husbands and young wives—says that the years that follow the eighth are the sweetest and the fullest of all. What, he asks—

> What
> For sweetness like the ten years' wife,
> Whose customary love is not
> Her passion, or her play, but life?
> With beauties so maturely fair,
> Affecting, mild, and manifold,
> May girlish charms no more compare
> Than apples green with apples gold.
> Ah, still unpraised Honoria, Heaven,
> When you into my arms it gave,
> Left naught hereafter to be given
> But grace to feel the good I have.

Here, then, is the crisis reached; the stand successfully made on behalf of the pansies; and all life fuller and richer for ever afterwards in consequence. Every man and woman at forty is called upon for a similar chivalrous effort. At forty we become the knights of the pansies, and if we let them go we shall find that at fifty it will be difficult to find even a sprig of heartsease anywhere.

Whether I take as my text the prophet's prayer for a revival and a revelation in the midst of the years, or the story of the man who was more than forty years old when he fell under the spell of the miraculous, I know how I shall close my sermon. I shall close by telling the story of Dr. Kenn and Maggie Tulliver from *The Mill on the Floss*. It will convince my hearers that folk in the forties have a great and beautiful and sacred ministry to exercise. Maggie was young, and the perplexities of life were too much for her. Dr. Kenn was arrested by the expression of anguish in her beautiful eyes. Dr. Kenn was himself neither young nor old, but middle-aged; and Maggie felt a childlike, instinctive relief when she saw that it was Dr. Kenn's face that was looking into hers. 'That plain, middle-aged face, with a grave, penetrating kindness in it, seeming to tell of a human being who had reached a firm, safe strand, but was looking with helpful pity towards the strugglers still tossed by the waves, had an effect on Maggie at this moment which was afterwards remembered by her as if it had been a promise.' And then George Eliot makes this trite and significant remark. 'The middle-aged,' she says, 'who have lived through their strongest emotions, but are yet in the time when memory is still half-passionate and not merely contemplative, should surely be a sort of natural priesthood, whom

life has disciplined and consecrated to be the refuge and rescue of early stumblers and victims of self-despair. Most of us, at some moment in our young lives, would have welcomed a priest of that natural order in any sort of canonicals or uncanonicals, but had to scramble upwards into all the difficulties of nineteen entirely without such aid.'

And after hearing that fine story my congregation of folk on the threshold of the forties will return from the quiet church to the busy street humming the songs that they sang at nineteen ; vowing that, come what may, the potatoes shall not elbow out all the pansies ; and congratulating themselves that the richest wine in the chalice of life still waits their thirsty lips.

## X

## A WOMAN'S REASON

"WILL you go with me?"

'"No, indeed; you must go alone. I shall not appear at all."

'"Why, mother?"

'"*Because!*"'

I came across the above passage near the beginning of one of Myrtle Reed's stories—*The Master's Violin*—and, towards the end, I found this:

'"Iris, I have been miserable ever since I told you I wrote the letters."

'"Why, dear?"

'"*Because!*"'

And then, in quite another book—Maurice Thompson's *Sweetheart Manette*—I came upon this:

'"Why can't you tell me?" asked Rowland Hatch.

'"I don't know that I have the right," replied Manette.

'"Why?"

'"*Because!*"'

Now, that word '*because*' is very interesting 'It is a woman's reason,' Miss Reed confides to us. That may, or may not, be so. I know nothing about that. It is not my business. I only know that it is the oldest reason, and the safest reason, and by far the strongest.

Now, really, no man can say why. As Miss Reed says in another passage lying midway between the two quoted: 'We all do things for which we can give no reason.' We do them *because*. No man can say why he prefers coffee to cocoa, or mutton to beef. He likes the one better than the other *because*. No man can say why he chose his profession. He decided to be a doctor or a carpenter *because*. No man can say why he fell in love with his wife. It would be an affectation to pretend that she is really incomparably superior to all other women upon the face of the earth. And yet to him she is not only incomparably superior, and incomparably lovelier, and incomparably nobler, but she is absolutely the one and only woman on the planet or off it. No other swims into the field of vision. She is first, and every other woman is nowhere. Why? '*Because!*' There is no other reason.

The fact is that we get into endless confusion when we sail out into the dark, mysterious seas

that lie beyond that 'because.' Nine times out of ten our conclusions are unassailable. And nine times out of ten our reasons for reaching those conclusions are absurdly illogical, totally inadequate, or grossly mistaken. Everybody remembers the fable of the bantam cock who assured the admiring farmyard that the sun rose every morning because of its anxiety to hear him crow! The fact was indisputable; the sun did certainly rise every morning. It was only at the attempt to ascribe a specific reason for its rising that the argument broke down. It is always safer to say that the sun rises every morning *because*. Ministers at least will recall the merriment that Hugh Latimer made of Master More. The good man had been appointed to investigate the cause of the Goodwin Sands. He met with small success in his inquiries. At last he came upon an old man who had lived in the district nearly a hundred years. The centenarian knew. The secret sparkled in his eyes. Master More approached the prodigy. 'Yes, sir,' the old man answered, 'I know. Tenterden Steeple is the cause of Goodwin Sands! I remember when they built the steeple. Before that we never heard of sands, or flats, or shallows off this haven. They built the steeple, and then came the sands. Yes, sir, Tenterden Steeple is the cause of the destruction of Sandwich Harbour!'

When we wander beyond that wise word 'because' circumstances seem malicious; they conspire to deceive us. I remember passing a window in London in which a sewing-machine was displayed. The machine was working. A large doll sat beside it, its hand on the wheel. The doll's hand appeared to be turning the handle. As a matter of fact, the machine was electrically driven, and the wheel turned the hand of the doll. In the realm of cause and effect we are frequently the dupes and victims of a very dexterous system of legerdemain. The resultant quantity is invariably clear; the contributing causes are not what they seem.

I find myself believing to-day pretty much what I believed twenty years ago; but I find myself believing the same things for different reasons. As life goes on, a man learns to put more and more confidence in his conclusions, and to become more and more chary of the reasons that led to those conclusions. If a certain course seems to him to be right, he automatically adopts it, and he confidently persists in it even after the reasons that first dictated it have fallen under suspicion. 'More than once in an emergency at sea,' says Dr. Grenfell, the hero of Labrador, 'I have swiftly decided upon a certain line of action. If I had waited to hem my reason into a corner before adopting that course, I should not be here to tell the tale.' We often

flatter ourselves that we base our conclusions upon our reasons. In reality, we do nothing of the kind. The mind works so rapidly that it tricks us. It is another case of legerdemain. Once more, it is the machine that turns the doll, and not the doll that turns the machine. Our thinking faculties often play at ride-a-cock-horse. We recall Browning's lines:

> When I see boys ride-a-cock-horse,
> I find it in my heart to embarrass them
> By hinting that their stick's a mock horse,
> And they really carry what they say carries them.

The rugged truth is, that we first of all reach our conclusions. That is the starting-point. Then, amazed at our own temerity in doing so, we hasten to tack on a few reasons as a kind of apology to ourselves for our own intrepidity, a tardy concession to intellectual decency and good order. But whether we recognize it or not, we do most things *because*. As Pascal told us long ago, 'the heart has reasons which the reason does not know. It is the heart that feels God, not the reason.' When old Samuel Wesley lay dying in 1735, he turned to his illustrious son John, saying: 'The inward witness, son, the inward witness! That is the proof, the strongest proof of Christianity!' 'I did not at the time understand him,' says John, in quoting the

words with approval long afterwards. But the root of the whole matter lies just there.

My reference to Dr. Grenfell reminds me. The good doctor was questioned the other day as to his faith in immortality. 'I believe in it,' he replied, 'because I believe in it. I am sure of it, because I am sure of it.' Precisely! That is the point. We believe *because*. And then, on our sure faith, we pile up a stupendous avalanche of Christian evidences. Emerson tells us of two American senators who spent a quarter of a century searching for conclusive evidence of the immortality of the soul. And Emerson finishes the story by saying that the impulse which prompted their long search was itself the strongest proof that they could have had. Of course! Although they knew it not, they already believed. They believed *because*. And then, finding their faith naked, and feeling ashamed, they set out to beg, borrow, or steal a few rags of reasons with which to deck it. It is the problem of Professor Teufelsdrockh and *Sartor Resartus* over again. It all comes back to Carlyle's 'Everlasting Yea.' The shame is mock modesty; and the craving is a false one. A woman's reason is the best reason. As the years go by, we become less and less eager for evidence. We are content to believe *because*. 'I was lately looking out of my window,' Martin Luther wrote from Coburg to

a friend, ' and I saw the stars in the heavens, and God's great beautiful arch over my head, but I could not see any pillars on which the great Builder had fixed this arch ; and yet the heavens fell not, and the great arch stood firmly. There are some who are always feeling for the pillars, and longing to touch them. And, because they cannot touch them, they stand trembling, and fearing lest the heavens should fall. If they could only grasp the pillars, then the heavens would stand fast.'

' " But how do you know that there is any Christ ? You never saw Him ! " said poor Augustine St. Clare, the slave-owner, to Uncle Tom, the slave.

' " I feel it in my soul, mas'r—feel Him now ! Oh, mas'r, the blessed Lord Jesus loves you ! "

' " But how do you know that, Tom ? " said St. Clare.

' " I feels it in my soul, mas'r ; oh, mas'r, the love of Christ that passeth knowledge."

' " But, Tom, you know that I have a great deal more knowledge than you ; what if I should tell you that I don't believe your Bible ? Wouldn't that shake your faith some, Tom ? "

' " Not a grain, mas'r ! " And St. Clare felt himself borne, on the tide of Tom's faith and feeling, almost to the gate of heaven.

' " I like to hear you, Tom ; and some time I'll talk more." '

Uncle Tom's argument was the strongest and most convincing after all; if only all we arguers, and debaters, and controversialists could come to recognize it. He believed *because*. And, now that I come to think of it, Miss Myrtle Reed is wrong in calling it a woman's reason. It is a divine argument, the oldest, and sweetest, and strongest of all divine arguments. I said just now that a man loves a woman just *because* he loves her, and he could not in a thousand volumes give an intelligent and convincing explanation of his preference. And—let me say it in a hushed and reverent whisper—God loves in much the same way. Listen, and let me read: 'The Lord did not set His love upon you because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people; but *because* the Lord loved you!' He loved *because* He loved. He loved *because*.

I intend, therefore, to proclaim the magnificent verities of the Christian gospel. I shall talk with absolute certainty, and with unwavering confidence, about the sin of man, the love of God, the Cross of Christ. If my message is met with a 'why' or a 'wherefore,' I have only one reply—'*Because!*' There is nothing else to be said. The preacher lives to tell a wonderful love-story. And a love-story is never arguable. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son!' Why? *Because!*

# PART II

# I

## THE HANDICAP

### I

It was a sunny autumn afternoon. The leaves were rustling about my feet, and the first nip of winter was in the air. It was Saturday, and I was out for a stroll. Suddenly a crowd attracted my attention, and, impelled by that curiosity which such a concourse invariably excites, I drew near to see whether it meant a fire or a fight. It was neither. As I approached I caught sight of young fellows moving in and out among the people, wearing light many-coloured garments, and I guessed that a race was about to be run. Almost as soon as I arrived, the men were called up, arranged in a long line, and preparations made for the start. At a signal two or three of them sprang out from the line and bounded with an easy stride along the road. A few seconds later, three or four more followed; then others; until at last only one was left; and, after a brief period of further waiting, he also left the line and set out in pursuit. It was a handicap, I

was told, and this man had started from scratch. It was to be a long race, and it would be some time before any of the runners could be expected back again. The crowd, therefore, dispersed for the time being, breaking up into knots and groups, each of which strolled off to while away the waiting time as its own taste suggested. I turned into a lane that led up into the bush on the hillside, and, from that sheltered and sunny eminence, watched for the first sign of the returning runners.

Sitting there with nothing to do, it flashed upon me that the scene I had just witnessed was a reflection, as in a mirror, of all human experience and endeavour. Most men are heavily handicapped; it is no good blinking the fact. Ask a man to undertake some office or assume some responsibility in connexion with the church, and he will silence you at once with a narration of the difficulties that stand in his way. Ask a man to act on some board or committee for the management of some charitable or philanthropic enterprise, and he will explain to you that he has not a minute to spare. Ask a man to subscribe to some most necessary or deserving object, and he will tell you of the incessant demands to which he is subjected. Now it is no good putting all this down to cant. We have no right to assume that these are merely the lame excuses of men who, in their secret souls, do not

desire to assist us. We must not hastily hurl at them the curse that fell upon Meroz because it came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty. All that they say is perfectly true. The difficulties that debar the first of these men from undertaking the work to which you are calling him are both real and formidable; the second man has every moment of his time fully occupied; the third man, because he is known to be generous, is badgered to death with collecting-lists from the first thing in the morning till the last thing at night. We must not judge these men too harshly. In the uncharitableness of our hearts we imagine that they have given us excuses which are not reasons. The fact is that they have done exactly the reverse; they have given us reasons which are not excuses. We are on safer ground when we recognize frankly that it is very difficult for many men to devote much time, much energy, and much money to the kingdom of God. Many men are heavily handicapped.

## II

'Isn't that one of the runners just coming in sight now?' a friend asked, pointing along the road. I fancied that he was right, so we rose and strolled down to the spot from which the race had started. We must have been mistaken, for when we emerged

from the lane there was no sign of the competitors. I was not sorry, however, that we had returned prematurely; for I noticed the handicapper strolling idly about, and got into conversation with him.

'There seems to me to be very little sense in a race of this kind,' I suggested to him. 'If those men win who started first, the honour is very small in view of the start they received; whilst if the man who started last fails to win, he feels it to be no disgrace, and comforts himself with the reflection that he was too heavily handicapped. Is that not so?'

'Oh, no,' replied the handicapper, politely concealing his pity for my simplicity; 'it works out just the other way. It isn't fair, don't you see, to keep those chaps that got away first always running in a class by themselves. It does not call out the best that is in them. But to-day it does them good to feel that they are being matched against some of the finest runners in the State, and they will strain every effort to try to beat the champions. And it does a man like Brown, who started from scratch, no harm to see those fellows all getting ahead of him at the start. He knows very well that he can beat any man in the country on level terms, and in such races he will only put forth just as much effort as is needed to get ahead of his opponent. But there is nothing to show that he

could not do much better still if only his opponen were more formidable. In a race like this, however, he knows that anything may happen. His usual rivals have all got a start of him ; if he is to defend his good name, he must beat all his previous records and bring his utmost power into play. And so every man in the race is put on his mettle. We consider the handicap a very useful race indeed ! '

' Perhaps so,' I said, feeling that I was beaten, but feebly attempting to cover my retreat ; ' but how do you compute the exact starts and handicaps which the different men are to take ? '

' Ah,' he said, ' now you've touched the vital question.' I was gratified at his recognition of the good order of my retirement. ' You see,' he went on, ' we have to look up the men's previous performances and work out the differences in their records with mathematical exactness. But there is something more than that. We have to know the men. You can't adjust the handicaps by rule of three. Anybody who has seen Jones run must have noticed that he's a bit downhearted. He has been beaten every time, and he goes into a race now expecting to be beaten, and is therefore beaten before he starts. He needs encouragement, and we have to consider that fact in arranging his handicap. Then there's Smith. He's too cocksure. He has never had any difficulty in beating men of his own

class. He needs putting on his mettle. So we increase his handicap accordingly. It takes a lot of working out, and a lot of thinking about, I tell you. But here they come!'

There was no mistake this time. A batch of runners came into sight all at once, the officials took their places, and the crowd clustered excitedly round. As we waited, the remarks to which I had just listened took powerful hold upon my mind. The handicaps of life may have been more carefully calculated and more beneficently designed than we have sometimes been inclined to suppose.

## III

It was a fine finish. As the first batch of men drew nearer I was pleased to notice that Brown, the fellow in light blue, who had started last, was among them. Gradually he drew out from the rest, and, with a magnificent spurt, asserted his superiority and won the race. A few minutes later I took the tram citywards. Just as it was starting, Brown also entered the car. I could not resist the opportunity of congratulating him.

'It must have taken the heart out of you,' I said, 'to see all the other fellows getting away in front of you, and to find yourself left to the last?'

'Oh, no,' he replied, with a laugh, 'it's a bit of an

honour, isn't it, to see that they think me so much better than everybody else that they fancy I have a sporting chance under such conditions? And, besides, it spurs a fellow to do his best. When you are accustomed to winning races, it doesn't feel nice to be beaten, even in a handicap, and to avoid being beaten you've got to go for all you're worth.'

I shook hands and left him. But I felt that he had given me something else to think about.

'It's a bit of an honour!' he had said. 'And, besides, it spurs a fellow to do his best!'

The next time a man tells me that he cannot help me because he is so heavily handicapped, what a tale I shall have to tell him!

## IV

My Saturday afternoon experience has convinced me that, in the Church, we have tragically misinterpreted the significance of handicaps.

'I am very heavily handicapped,' we say in the Church, 'therefore I must not attempt this thing!'

'I am very heavily handicapped,' they say out there at their sports, 'therefore I must put all my strength into it!'

And who can doubt that the philosophy of the Churchmen is false, or that the philosophy of the sportsmen is sound? There is a great saying of

Bacon's that every handicapped man should learn by heart. 'Whosoever,' he says, 'hath anything fixed in his person that doth induce contempt hath also a perpetual spur in himself to rescue and deliver himself from scorn.' Is that why so many of the world's greatest benefactors were men who bore in their bodies the marks of physical affliction—blindness, deafness, disease, and the like? They felt that they were heavily handicapped, and that their handicap called them to make a supreme effort 'to rescue and deliver themselves from scorn.'

When speaking of the difficulty which a black boy experiences in America in competing with his white rivals, Booker Washington tells us that his own pathetic and desperate struggle taught him that 'success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.' There is a good deal in that. I was once present at a meeting of a certain Borough Council, at which an engineer had to report on a certain proposal which the municipal authorities were discussing. The engineer contented himself with remarking that there were serious difficulties in the way of the execution of the plan. Whereupon the Mayor turned upon the unfortunate engineer and remarked, 'We pay you your salary, Mr. Engineer, not to tell us that difficulties exist, but to show

us how to surmount them!' I thought it rather a severe rebuke at the time, but very often since, when I have been tempted to allow my handicaps to divert me from my duty, I have been glad that I heard the poor engineer censured.

I was once deeply and permanently impressed by a chairman's speech at a meeting in Exeter Hall. That noble old auditorium was crowded from floor to ceiling for the annual missionary demonstration of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The chair was occupied by Mr. W. E. Knight, of Newark. In the course of a most earnest plea for missionary enthusiasm, Mr. Knight suddenly became personal. 'I was born in a missionary atmosphere,' he said. 'I have lived in it ever since; I hope I shall die in it. Over forty years ago my heart was touched with the story of the world's needs; when I heard such men as Gervase Smith, Dr. Punshon, Richard Roberts, G. T. Perks, and others, I said, "Lord, here am I, send me." I came up to London forty-one years ago as a candidate for the Methodist ministry. I offered myself, but the Church did not see fit to accept my offer. I remember well coming up to the college at Westminster and being told of the decision of the committee by that sainted man, William Jackson. I went to the little room in which I had slept with a broken heart. I despised myself. I was rejected of men, and I felt that I

was forsaken of God.' Now here is a man heavily handicapped; but let him finish his story. 'In that moment of darkness,' Mr. Knight continued, 'the deepest darkness of my life, there came to me a voice which has influenced my life from then till now. It said, "If you cannot go yourself, send some one else." I was a poor boy then; I knew that I could not pay for anybody else to go. But time rolled on. I prospered in business. And to-night I shall lay on the altar a sum which I wish the committee to invest, and the interest on that sum will support a missionary in Africa, not during my lifetime only, but as long as capital is capable of earning interest. And, ladies and gentlemen, I assure you that this is a red-letter day in my life!'

Of course it was! It was the day on which he had turned his handicap to that account for which all handicaps were intended.

'My handicap was an honour and a spur!' said the champion in the tramcar.

'My handicap was an honour and a spur!' said the chairman at Exeter Hall.

Both the champion and the chairman did by means of their handicaps what they could never have done without those handicaps. There can be no doubt about it; handicaps were designed, not as the pitiful excuses of the indolent, but as the magnificent inspirations of the brave.

## II

## GOG AND MAGOG

Gog and Magog, let it be clearly understood, are the two tall poplar-trees that keep ceaseless vigil by my gate. I state this fact baldly and unequivocally at the very outset in order to set at rest, once and for ever, all controversies and disputations on that fascinating point. Historians will reach down the ponderous and dusty tomes that litter up their formidable shelves, and will tell me that Gog and Magog were two famous British giants whose life-sized statues, fourteen feet high, have stood for more than two hundred years in the Guildhall in London. But that is all that the historians know about it! Theologians, and especially theologians of a certain school, will remind me that Gog and Magog are biblical characters. Are they not mentioned in the prophecy of Ezekiel and in the Book of Revelation? And then, looking gravely over their spectacles, these learned-looking gentlemen will ask me if I am seriously of opinion that the inspired writers were

referring to my pair of lofty poplars. I hasten to assure these nervous and unimaginative gentlemen that I propose to commit myself to no such heresy. Like Mrs. Gamp, I would not presume. For ages past these cryptic titles have provided my excellent friends with ground for interminable speculation, and for the most ingenious exploits of interpretation. How could I have the heart to exclusively allocate to these stately sentinels that guard my gate the titles that have afforded the interpreters such endless pleasure? I would as soon attempt to snatch from a boy his only peg-top, or from a girl her only doll, as embark upon so barbarous an atrocity. How could they ever again declare, with the faintest scrap of confidence, that Gog and Magog represented any particular pair of princes or potentates if I deliberately anticipate them by walking off with both labels and coolly attaching them to my two poplar-trees? The thing is absurd upon the face of it. And so I repeat that for the purposes of this article, and for the purposes of this article only, Gog and Magog are the two tall poplar-trees that keep ceaseless vigil by my gate.

Trees are very lovable things. We all like Beaconsfield the better because he was so passionately devoted to the trees at Hughenden. He was so fond of them that he directed in his will that none of them should ever be cut down. So I am not

ashamed of my tenderness for Gog and Magog. There they stand, down at the gate; the one on the one side, and the other on the other. Huge giants they are, with a giant's strength and a giant's stature, but with more than a giant's grace. From whichever direction I come, they always seem to salute me with a welcome as soon as I come round the bend in the road. It is always pleasant when home has something about it that can be seen at a distance. The last half-mile on the homeward road is the half-mile in which the climax of weariness is reached. It is like the last straw that breaks the camel's back. But if there is a light at the window, or some clear landmark that distinguishes the spot, the very sight of the familiar object lures the traveller on, and in actual sight of home he forgets his fatigue.

It is a very pleasant thing to have two glorious poplars at your gate. They always seem to be craning, straining, towering upward to catch the first glimpse of you; and they make home seem nearer as soon as you come within sight of them. Gog and Magog are such companionable things. They always have something to say to you. It is true that they talk of little but the weather; but then, that is what most people talk about. I like to see them in August, when a certain olive sheen mantles their branches and tells you that the

swallows will soon be here. I like to see them in October, when they are a towering column of verdure, every leaf as bright as though it has just been varnished. I even like to see them in April, when they strew the paths with a rustling litter of bronze and gold. They tell me that winter is coming, with its long evenings, its roaring fires, and its insistence on the superlative attractions of home. There never dawns a day on which Gog and Magog are not well worth looking at and well worth listening to.

But although I have been speaking of Gog and Magog as though they were as much alike as two peas, the very reverse is the case. No two things —not even the two peas—are exactly alike. When God makes a thing He breaks the mould. The two peas do not resemble each other under a microscope. Macaulay, in his essay on Madame D'Arblay, declares that this extraordinary range of distinctions within very narrow limits is one of the most notable things in the universe. 'No two faces are alike,' he says, 'and yet very few faces deviate very widely from the common standard. Among the millions of human beings who inhabit London, there is not one who could be taken by his acquaintance for another; yet we may walk from Paddington to Mile End without seeing one person in whom any feature is so overcharged that we turn round to

stare at it. An infinite number of varieties lies between limits which are not very far asunder. The specimens which pass those limits on either side form a very small minority.'

So is it with trees. When you first drive up an avenue of poplars you regard each tree as the exact duplicate of all the others. There is certainly a general similarity, just as, in some households, there is a striking family likeness. But just as, after spending a few days with that household, you no longer mistake Jack for Charlie, or Jessie for Jean, and even laugh at yourself for ever having been so stupid, so, when you get to know the poplars better, you no longer suppose that they are all alike. You soon detect the marks of individuality among them; and, if one were felled and brought you, you could describe with perfect accuracy the two trees between which it stood. That is particularly the case with Gog and Magog. A casual visitor would remark, as he approached the house, that we had a pair of gigantic poplars at the front gate. It does not occur to him to distinguish between them. For aught he knows, or for aught he cares, Gog might be Magog, or Magog might be Gog. But to us the thing is absurd. We know them so well that we should as soon think of mistaking one of the children for another as of mistaking Gog for Magog, or Magog for Gog. We salute the tall trees

every morning when we rise; we pass them with mystic greetings of our own a dozen times a day; and, before retiring at night, we like to peep from the front windows and see their gigantic forms grandly silhouetted against the evening sky. Gog is Gog, and Magog is Magog; and the idea of mistaking the one for the other seems ludicrous in the extreme. The solar system is as full of mysteries as a conjurer's portmanteaux; but, of all the mysteries that it contains, the mystery of individuality is surely the most inscrutable of all.

'What is the difference between Gog and Magog?' somebody wants to know; and I am glad that somebody asked the question, for it gives me the opportunity of pointing out that between Gog and Magog there is all the difference in the world. There is a difference in girth; there is a difference in height; and there is a difference in fibre. I have just run a tape round both trees. Magog gives a measurement of just six feet; whilst Gog puts those puny proportions to shame with a record of seven feet six inches. I have not attempted to climb the trees; but I can see at a glance that Gog is at least eight feet taller than his brother. Nor do these measurements sum up the whole of Gog's advantage. For you cannot glance at the twins without seeing that Gog is incalculably the sturdier. In the trunk of Magog there is a huge cavity into

which a child could creep and be perfectly concealed; but Gog is as sound as a bell. Any one who has seen two brothers grow up side by side—the one sturdy, masculine, virile, and full of health; the other, puny, delicate, fragile, and threatened with disease—knows how I feel whenever I pass between these two sentries at the gate. I am full of admiration for the glorious strength of Gog; I am touched to tenderness by the comparative frailty of poor Magog. It is odd that two trees of the same age, growing together under precisely identical conditions, should have turned out so differently. There must be a reason for it. Is there? There is!

The fact is, Gog gets all the wind. I have often watched the storm come sweeping down on the two tall trees, and it is grand to watch them. The huge things sway and bend like tossing plumes, and sometimes you almost fancy that they will break like reeds before the fury of the blast. Great branches are torn off; smaller boughs and piles of twigs are scattered all around like wounded soldiers on a hotly contested field; but the trees outlive the storm, and you love them all the better for it. But, all the time, you can see that it is Gog that is doing the fighting. The fearful onslaught breaks first upon him; and the force of the attack is broken by the time it reaches Magog. It may be that Gog is very fond of Magog, and, pitying his

frailty, seeks to shelter him. It certainly looks like it. But, if so, it is a mistaken kindness. It is just because Gog has had to bear the brunt of so many attacks that he has sent down his roots so deeply and has become so magnificently strong. It is because Magog has always been protected and sheltered that he is so feeble, and cuts so sorry a figure beside his stouter brother.

And now I find myself sitting at the feet of Gog and Magog, not only literally but metaphorically, and they begin to teach me things. It is not half a bad thing to be living in a world that has some fight in it. It is a good thing for a man to be buffeted and knocked about. I fancy that Gog and Magog could say some specially comforting things to parents. The tendency among us is to try to secure for our children the kind of life that Magog leads, hidden, sheltered, and protected. Yet nobody can take a second glance at poor Magog —his shorter stature, his smaller girth, his softer fibre—without entertaining the gravest doubts concerning the wisdom of so apparently considerate a choice. It is perfectly natural, and altogether creditable to the fond hearts and earnest solicitude of doting parents, that they should seek to rear their children like hot-house plants, protected from the nipping frosts and frigid blasts of a chilling world. But it can be overdone. A great meeting,

attended by five thousand people, was recently held in London to deal with the White Slave question. And I was greatly struck by the fact that one of the most experienced and observant of the speakers—the Rev. J. Ernest Rattenbury, of the West London Mission—declared with deep emotion and impressive emphasis that 'it is the girls who come from *the sheltered homes* who stand in the greatest peril.' Perhaps I shall render the most practical service if I put the truth the other way. Instead of dwelling so much on Magog, look at Gog. I know fathers and mothers who are inclined to break their hearts because their boys and girls have had to go out from the shielding care of their homes into the rough and tumble of the great world. Look at Gog, I say again, look at Gog!

Was it not Alfred Russel Wallace who tried to help an emperor-moth, and only harmed it by his ill-considered ministry? He came upon the creature beating its wings and struggling wildly to force its passage through the narrow neck of its cocoon. He admired its fine proportions, eight inches from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other, and thought it a pity that so handsome a creature should be subjected to so severe an ordeal. He therefore took out his lancet and slit the cocoon. The moth came out at once; but its glorious colours never developed. The soaring wings never

expanded. The indescribable hues and tints and shades that should have adorned them never appeared. The moth crept moodily about; drooped perceptibly; and presently died. The furious struggle with the cocoon was Nature's wise way of developing the splendid wings and of sending the vital fluids pulsing through the frame until every particle blushed with their beauty. The naturalist had saved the little creature from the struggle, but had unintentionally ruined and slain it in the process. It is the story of Gog and Magog over again.

In my college days I used to go down to a quaint little English village for the week-end in order to conduct services in the village chapel on Sunday. I was always entertained by a little old lady whose face haunts me still. It was so very human, and so very wise, and withal so very beautiful; and the white ringlets on either side completed a perfect picture. She dwelt in a modest little cottage on top of the hill. It was a queer, tumble-down old place with crooked rafters and crazy lattice windows. Roses and honeysuckle clambered all over the porch, straggled along the walls, and even crept under the eaves into the cottage itself. The thing that impressed me when I first went was the extraordinary number of old Bessie's visitors. On Saturday nights they came one after another, young

men and sedate matrons, old men and tripping maidens, and each desired to see her alone. She was very old; she had known hunger and poverty; the deeply furrowed brow told of long and bitter trouble. She was a great sufferer, too, and daily wrestled with her pitiless disease. But, like the sturdier of the poplars by my gate, she had gathered into herself the force of all the cruel winds that had beaten so savagely upon her. And the result was that her own character had become so strong and so upright and so beautiful that she was recognized as the high-priestess of that English countryside, and every man and maiden who needed counsel or succour made a beaten path to her open door.

## III

## MY WARDROBE

CHANGING your mind is for all the world like changing your clothes. You may easily make a mistake, especially if the process is performed in the dark. And, as a matter of fact, a man is usually more or less in the dark at the moment in which he changes his mind. An absent-minded friend of mine went upstairs the other day to prepare for a social function. To the consternation of his unhappy wife he came down again wearing his old gardening suit. A man may quite easily make a mistake. Before he enters upon the process of robing he must be sure of three things: (1) He must be quite clear that the clothes he proposes to doff are unsuitable. (2) He must be sure that his wardrobe contains more appropriate apparel. (3) And he must be certain that the folded garments that he takes from the drawer are actually those that he made up his mind to wear. It is a good thing,

similarly, to change one's mind. But the thing must be done very deliberately, and even with scientific precision, or a man may make himself perfectly ridiculous. Let me produce a pair of illustrations, one from Boswell, which is good; and one from the Bible, which is better.

(1) Dr. Samuel Johnson was a frequent visitor at the house of Mr. Richardson, the famous novelist. One day, whilst Johnson was there, Hogarth called. Hogarth soon started a discussion with Mr. Richardson as to the justice of the execution of Dr. Cameron. 'While he was talking, he perceived a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself about in a strange, ridiculous manner. He concluded that he was *an idiot*, whom his relations had put under the care of Mr. Richardson, as being a very good man. To his great surprise, however, this figure stalked forwards to where he and Mr. Richardson were sitting, and all at once took up the argument. He displayed such a power of eloquence that Hogarth looked at him with astonishment, and actually imagined that he was *inspired*.' Thus far Boswell.

(2) Paul was shipwrecked, as everybody knows, at Malta. He was gathering sticks for the fire, when a viper, thawed by the warm flesh and the fierce flame, fastened on his finger. When the natives saw the snake hanging on his hand, they

regarded it as a judgement, and said that no doubt he was a *murderer*. But when they saw that he was none the worse for the bite, ' they changed their minds, and said that he was *a god* ! '

Hogarth thought Johnson was a *lunatic*. He changed his mind, and said he was *inspired* !

The Maltese thought Paul was a *murderer*. They changed their minds, and said he was a *god* !

They were all wrong, and always wrong. It is the case of my poor absent-minded friend over again. It was quite clear that his clothes wanted changing, but he put on the wrong suit. It was evident that Hogarth's verdict on Johnson wanted revising, but he rushed from Scylla to Charybdis. It was manifest that the Maltese view of Paul needed correcting, but they swung, like a pendulum, from one ludicrous extreme to the opposite. In each case, the hero reappears, wearing the wrong clothes. In each case he only makes himself ridiculous. If my mind wants changing, I must be very cautious as to the way in which I do it.

And, of course, a man *must* sometimes change both his clothes and his mind—his *mind* at any rate. How can you go to a conjuring entertainment, for example, without changing your mind a hundred times in the course of the performance ? For a second you think that the vanished billiard ball is *here*. Then, in a trice, you change your mind,

and conclude that it is *there*! First, you believe that, appearances notwithstanding, the magician really has *no* hat in his hand. Then, in a flash, you change your mind, and you fancy he has *two*! You think for a moment that the clever trick is done in *this* way, and then you become certain that it is done in *that*! I once witnessed in London a very clever artist, who walked up and down the stage, passing midway behind a screen. And as he reappeared on the other side, after having been hidden from sight for only a fraction of a second, he was differently dressed. He stepped behind the screen a soldier, and emerged a policeman. He disappeared a huntsman, he reappeared a clergyman. He went a convict, he came again a sailor. He wore a score of uniforms in almost as many seconds.

I began by saying that changing your mind is for all the world like changing your clothes. It is less tedious, however. I have no idea how my London friend managed to change his garments many times in a minute. But many a magician has made me change my mind at a lightning pace. Yes, many a magician. For the universe is, after all, a kind of magic. The wand of the wizard is at its wonderful work. It is the highest type of legerdemain. It is very weird and very wonderful, a thing of marvel and of mystery. No man can

sit down and gaze for five minutes with wide open eyes upon God's worlds without changing his mind at least five times. The man who never changes his mind will soon discover to his shame that he is draped in intellectual rags and tatters.

I rather think that Macaulay's illustration is as good as any. 'A traveller,' he says in his essay on Sir James Mackintosh, 'falls in with a berry which he has never before seen. He tastes it, and finds it sweet and refreshing. He presses it, and resolves to introduce it into his own country. But in a few minutes he is taken violently sick; he is convulsed; he is at the point of death. He, of course, changes his mind, pronounces this delicious food a poison, blames his own folly in tasting it, and cautions his friends against it. After a long and violent struggle he recovers, and finds himself much exhausted by his sufferings, but free from chronic complaints which had been the torment of his life. He then changes his mind again, and pronounces this fruit a very powerful remedy, which ought to be employed only in extreme cases, and with great caution, but which ought not to be absolutely excluded from the Pharmacopoeia. Would it not be the height of absurdity to call such a man fickle and inconsistent because he had repeatedly altered his judgement?' Of course it would. A man cannot go all through life wearing the same suit of

clothes. For two reasons. It will not always fit, and it will wear out. And, in precisely the same way, and for identically similar reasons, a man must sometimes change his opinions. It is refreshing to think of Augustine carefully compiling a list of the mistakes that had crept into his writings, so that he might take every opportunity of repudiating and correcting them. I never consult my copies of Archbishop Trench's great works on *The Parables* and *The Miracles* without glancing, always with a glow of admiration, at that splendid sentence with which the 'Publisher's Note' concludes: 'The author never allowed his books to be stereotyped, in order that he might constantly improve them, and permanence has only become possible now that his diligent hand can touch the work no more.' That always strikes me as being very fine.

But the thing must be done methodically. Let me not rush upstairs and change either my clothes or my mind for the mere sake of making a change. Nor must I tumble into the first suit that I happen to find—in either wardrobe. When I reappear, the change must commend itself to the respect, if not the admiration, of my fellows. I do not want men to laugh at my change as we have laughed at these Maltese natives, at old Hogarth, and at my absent-minded friend. I want to be quite sure that

the clothes that I doff are the wrong clothes, and that the clothes that I don are the right ones.

Mr. Gladstone once thought out very thoroughly this whole question as to how frequently and how radically a man may change his mental outfit without forfeiting the confidence of those who have come to value his judgements. And, as a result of that hard thinking, the great man reached half a dozen very clear and very concise conclusions. (1) He concluded that a change of front is very often not only permissible but creditable. 'A change of mind,' he says, 'is a sign of life. If you are alive, you must change. It is only the dead who remain the same. I have changed my point of view on a score of subjects, and my convictions as to many of them.' (2) He concluded that a great change, involving a drastic social cleavage, not unlike a change in religion, should certainly occur not more than once in a lifetime. (3) He concluded that a great and cataclysmic change should never be sudden or precipitate. (4) He concluded that no change ought to be characterized by a contemptuous repudiation of old memories and old associations. (5) He concluded that no change ought to be regarded as final or worthy of implicit confidence if it involved the convert in temporal gain or worldly advantage. (6) And he concluded that any change, to command respect, must be frankly

confessed, and not be hooded, slurred over, or denied.

All this is good, as far as it goes. But even Mr. Gladstone must not be too hard on sudden and cataclysmic changes. What about Saul on the road to Damascus? What about Augustine that morning in his garden? What about Brother Laurence and the dry tree? What about Stephen Grellet in the American forest? What about Luther on Pilate's staircase? What about Bunyan and Newton, Wesley and Spurgeon? What about the tales that Harold Begbie tells? And what about the work of General Booth? Professor James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, has a good deal to say that would lead Mr. Gladstone to yet one more change of mind concerning the startling suddenness with which the greatest of all changes may be precipitated.

And this, too, must be said. Every wise man has, locked away in his heart, a few treasures that he will never either give or sell or exchange. It is a mistake to suppose that all our opinions are open to revision. They are not. There are some things too sacred to be always open to scrutiny and investigation. No self-respecting man will spend his time inquiring as to his wife's probity and honour. He makes up his mind as to that when he marries her; and henceforth that question is

settled. It is not open to review. He would feel insulted if an investigation were suggested. It is only the small things of life that we are eternally questioning. We are reverently restful and serenely silent about the biggest things of all. A man does not discuss his wife's virtue or his soul's salvation on the kerbstone. The martyrs all went to their deaths with brave hearts and morning faces, because they were not prepared to reconsider or review the greatest decision they had ever made. There are some things on which no wise man will think of changing his mind. And he will decline to contemplate a change because he knows that his wardrobe holds no better garb. It is of no use doffing the robes of princes to don the rags of paupers. 'Eighty and six years have I served Christ,' exclaimed the triumphant Polycarp ; and he mounted the heavens in wreathing smoke and leaping flame rather than change his mind after so long and so lovely an experience.

## IV

## 'PITY MY SIMPLICITY!'

It was a sultry summer's day a hundred and fifty years ago, and John Wesley was on the rocky road to Dublin. 'The wind being in my face, tempering the heat of the sun, I had a pleasant ride to Dublin. In the evening I began expounding the deepest part of the Holy Scripture, namely, the First Epistle of John, by which, above all other, even above all other inspired writings, I advise every young preacher to form his style. Here are sublimity and simplicity together, the strongest sense and the plainest language! How can any one that would speak as the oracles of God use harder words than are to be found here?' With which illuminating extract from the great man's journal we may dismiss him, the road to Dublin, and the text from which he preached in the Irish capital, all together. I have no further business with any of them. The thing that concerns me is the suggestive declaration, made by

the most experienced preacher of all time, that *sublimity* and *simplicity* always go hand in hand. Here, in this deepest part of Holy Scripture, says the master, are sublimity and simplicity together. 'By this, above all other writings, I advise every preacher to form his style. How can any one that would speak as the oracles of God use harder words than are to be found here?' Such words from such a source are like apples of gold in pictures of silver, and I am thankful that I chanced to come upon the great man that hot July night in Dublin, and gather this distilled essence of wisdom as it fell from his eloquent lips.

I have often wondered why we teach children to pray that their simplicity may be pitied.

> Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
> Look upon a little child!
> Pity my simplicity!
> Suffer me to come to Thee!

Why 'pity my simplicity'? It is the one thing about a little child that is really sublime, sublimity and simplicity being, as we learned at Dublin, everlastingly inseparable. Pity my simplicity! Why, it is the sweet simplicity of a little child that we all admire and love and covet! Pity my simplicity! Why, it is the unspoiled and sublime simplicity of this little child of mine that

takes my heart by storm and carries everything before it. And, depend upon it, the heart of the divine Father is affected not very differently. This soft, sweet little white-robed thing that kneels on my knee, with its arms around my neck, lisping its

> Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
> Look upon a little child!
> Pity my simplicity!
> Suffer me to come to Thee!

shames me by its very sublimity. It outstrips me, transcends me, and leaves me far behind. It soars whilst I grovel; it flies whilst I creep. That is what Jesus meant when He took a little child and set him in the midst of the disciples and said, 'Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven!' The simplest, He meant, is always the sublimest. And it was because the great Methodist had so perfectly caught the spirit of his great Master that he declared so confidently that night at Dublin, 'Simplicity and sublimity lie here together!'

It is always and everywhere the same. In literature sublimity is represented by the poet. What could be more sublime than the inspired imagination of Milton? And yet, and yet! The very greatest of all our literary critics, in his essay on Milton, feels it incumbent upon him to point

out that imagination is essentially the domain of childhood. 'Of all people,' he says, 'children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by Hamlet or Lear as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Ridinghood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet, in spite of the knowledge, she believes; she weeps; she trembles; she dares not go into a dark room lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at her throat.' And from these premisses, Macaulay proceeds to his inevitable conclusion. 'He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet must,' he says, 'first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must unlearn much of that knowledge which has perhaps constituted hitherto his chief title to superiority. His very talents will be a hindrance to him. His difficulties will be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigour and activity of his mind.' Could there be any finer comment on the words of the Master?

'Simplicity and sublimity always go together!' said John Wesley that hot July night at Dublin.

'Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven!' said the Master on that memorable day in Galilee.

'He who aspires to be a great poet must first become a little child!' says Lord Macaulay in his incomparable essay on Milton.

I have carefully put the Master in His old place. He is *in the midst,* with the very greatest of our modern apostles on the one side of Him, and the very greatest of our modern historians on the other. But they are all three of them saying the same thing, each in his own way. It is a pity that we teach our children that the sublimest thing about them—their simplicity—is a thing of which they need to be ashamed. And the way in which their tiny tongues stumble over the great word seems to show that, following a true instinct, they do not take kindly to that clause in their bedtime prayer.

I am told that, away beyond the Never-Never ranges, there is a church from which the children are excluded before the sermon begins. I wish my informant had not told me of its existence. I am not often troubled with nightmare, my supper being quite a frugal affair. But just occasionally I find myself a victim of the terror by night. And

when I am mercifully awakened, and asked why I am gasping so horribly and perspiring so freely, I have to confess that I was dreaming that I had somehow become the minister of that childless congregation. As is usual after nightmare, I look round with a sense of inexpressible thankfulness on discovering that it was only a horrid dream. An appointment to such a charge would be to me a most fearsome and terrifying prospect. I could not trust myself. In a way, I envy the man who can hold his own under such circumstances. His transcendent powers enable him to preserve his sturdy humanness of character, his charming simplicity of diction, his graphic picturesqueness of phrase, and his exquisite winsomeness of behaviour without the extraneous assistance which the children render to some of us. But *I* could not do it. I should go all to pieces. And so, when I dream that I have entered a pulpit from which I can survey no roguish young faces and mischievous wide-open eyes, I fancy I am ruined and undone. I watch with consternation as the little people file out during the hymn before the sermon, and I know that the sermon is doomed. The children in the congregation are my salvation.

I fancy that the custom to which I have referred was in vogue in the church to which the Rev.

Bruno Leathwaite Chilvers ministered. Everybody knows Mr. Chilvers; at least everybody who loves George Gissing knows that very excellent gentleman. Mr. Chilvers loved to adorn his dainty discourses with certain words of strangely grandiloquent sound. '"Nullifidian," "morbific," "renascent"—these were among his favourites. Once or twice he spoke of "psychogenesis" with an emphatic enunciation which seemed to invite respectful wonder. In using Latin words which have become fixed in the English language, he generally corrected the common errors of quantity and pronounced words as nobody else did. He often alluded to French and German authors in order that he might recite French and German quotations.' And so on. Poor Mr. Chilvers! I am sure that the little children filed out during the hymn before the sermon. No man with a scrap of imagination could look into the dimpled face of a little girl I know and hurl 'nullifidian' at her. No man could look down into a certain pair of sparkling eyes that are wonderfully familiar to me and talk about things as 'morbific' or 'renascent.' If only the little tots had kept their seats for the sermon, it would have saved poor Mr. Chilvers from committing such atrocities. As it is, they went and he collapsed. Can anybody imagine John Wesley talking to his summer-evening

crowd at Dublin about 'nullifidian,' or quoting German? I will say nothing of the Galilean preacher. The common people heard *Him* gladly. He was so simple and therefore so sublime. As Sir Edwin Arnold says:

> The simplest sights He met—
> The Sower flinging seed on loam and rock;
> The darnel in the wheat; the mustard-tree
> That hath its seeds so little, and its boughs
> Widespreading; and the wandering sheep; and nets
> Shot in the wimpled waters—drawing forth
> Great fish and small—these, and a hundred such,
> Seen by us daily, never seen aright,
> Were pictures for Him from the page of life,
> Teaching by parable.

Therein lay the sublimity of it all.

A little child, especially a little child of a distinctly restless and mischievous propensity, is really a great help to a minister, and it is a shame to deprive the good man of such assistance. It is only by such help that some of us can hope to approximate to real sublimity. Lord Beaconsfield used to say that, in making after-dinner speeches, he kept his eye on the waiters. If they were unmoved, he knew that he was in the realms of mediocrity. But when they grew excited and waved their napkins, he knew that he was getting home. Lord Cockburn, who was for some time Lord Chief Justice of Great Britain, when asked for the secret

of his extraordinary success at the bar, replied sagely, 'When I was addressing a jury, I invariably picked out the stupidest-looking fellow of the lot, and addressed myself specially to him—for this good reason: I knew that if I convinced *him* I should be sure to carry all the rest!' Dr. Thomas Guthrie, in addressing gatherings of ministers, used to tell this story of Lord Cockburn with immense relish, and earnestly commended its philosophy to their consideration. I was reading the other day that Dr. Boyd Carpenter, formerly Bishop of Ripon and now Canon of Westminster, on being asked if he felt nervous when preaching before Queen Victoria, replied, 'I never address the Queen at all. I know there will be present the Queen, the Princes, the household, and the servants down to the scullery-maid, and *I preach to the scullery-maid.*' Little children do not attend political dinners such as Lord Beaconsfield adorned; nor Courts of Justice such as Lord Cockburn addressed; nor Royal chapels like that in which Dr. Boyd Carpenter officiated. And, in the absence of the children, the only chance of reaching sublimity that offered itself to these unhappy orators lay in making good use of the waiter, the stupid juryman, and the scullery-maid. If the Rev. Bruno Leathwaite Chilvers really cannot induce the children to abandon the bad habit in which they

have been trained, I urge him, as a friend and a brother, to adopt the same ingenious expedient. But if he can get on the right side of a little child, persuade him to sit the sermon out, and vow that he will look straight into that bright little face, and say no word that will not interest that tiny listener, I promise him that before long people will say that his sermons are simply sublime. Robert Louis Stevenson knew what he was doing when he discussed every sentence of *Treasure Island* with his schoolboy step-son before giving it its final form. It was by that wise artifice that one of the greatest stories in our language came to be written.

The fact, of course, is that in the soul's sublimest moments it hungers for simplicity. One of Du Maurier's great *Punch* cartoons represented a honeymoon conversation between a husband and wife who had both covered themselves with glory at Cambridge. And the conversation ran along these highly intellectual lines :

' What would Lovey do if Dovey died ? '

' Oh, Lovey would die too ! '

There is a world of philosophy behind the nonsense. We do not make love in the language of the psychologist ; we make love in the language of the little child. When life approaches to sublimity, it always expresses itself with simplicity. In the depth of mortal anguish, or at the climax of human

joy, we do not use a grandiloquent and incomprehensible phraseology. We talk in monosyllables. As we grow old, and draw near to the gates of the grave, we become more and more simple. In his declining years, John Newton wrote, 'When I was young I was sure of many things. There are only two things of which I am sure now; one is that I am a miserable sinner, and the other that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour.' What is this but the soul garbing itself in the most perfect simplicities as the only fitting raiment in which it can greet the everlasting sublimities?

'Here are sublimity and simplicity together!' exclaimed John Wesley on that hot July night at Dublin. 'How can any one that would speak as the oracles of God use harder words than are to be found here? By this I advise every young preacher to form his style!'

'He who aspires to be a great poet—as sublime as Milton—must first become a little child!' declares the greatest of all littérateurs.

'Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven!' says the Master Himself, taking a little child and setting him in the midst of them.

'*Pity my simplicity!*' pleads this little thing with its soft arms round my neck.

'*Give me that simplicity!*' say I.

## V

## TUNING FROM THE BASS

I AM about to say a good word for Fear. Fear is a fine thing, a very fine thing; and the world would be a poor place without it. Fear was one of our firmest but gentlest nurses. Terror was one of our sternest but kindest teachers. A very wise man once said that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. He might have left out the august and holy Name, and still have stated a tremendous fact; for fear is always the beginning of wisdom.

'No fears, no grace!' said James, in the second part of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Mr. Greatheart seemed of pretty much the same opinion. They were discussing poor Mr. Fearing.

'Mr. Fearing,' said Greatheart, 'was one that played upon the bass. Some say that the bass is the ground of music. The first string that the musician touches is the bass, when he intends to put all in tune. God also plays upon this string first, when He sets the soul in tune for Himself. Only

here was the imperfection of Mr. Fearing: he could play upon no other music but this, till towards his latter end.'

Here, then, we have the principle stated as well as it is possible to state it. You must tune from the bass, for the bass is the basis of music. But you must rise from the bass, as a building must rise from its foundations, or the music will be a moan and a monotone. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; but the wisdom that gets no farther is like music that rumbles and reverberates in one everlasting bass.

But the finest exposition of the inestimable value of fear is not by John Bunyan. It is by Jack London. *White Fang* is the greatest story of the inner life of an animal that has ever been contributed to our literature. And Jack London, who seems to have got into the very soul of a wolf, shows us how the wonderful character of White Fang was moulded and fashioned by fear. First there was the mere physical fear of Pain; the dread of hurting his tender little nose as the tiny grey cub explored the dark recesses of the lair; the horror of his mother's paw that smote him down whenever he approached the mouth of the cave; and, later on, the fear of the steep bank, learned by a terrible fall; the fear of the yielding water, learned by attempting to walk upon it; and the fear of the ptarmigan's beak

and the weasel's teeth, learned by robbing their respective nests.

And following on the physical fear of *Pain* came the reverential fear of *Power*. 'His mother represented Power,' Jack London says, 'and as he grew older he felt this power in the sharper admonition of her paw, while the reproving nudge of her nose gave place to the slash of her fangs. For this he respected his mother.' And afterwards, when he came upon the Red Indians, and saw men for the first time, a still greater fear possessed him. Here were creatures who made the very sticks and stones obey them! They seemed to him as gods, and he felt that he must worship and serve them. And, later still, when he saw white men living, not in wigwams, but in great palaces of stone, he trembled as he had never trembled before. These were superior gods; and, as everybody knows, White Fang passed from fearing them to knowing them, and from knowing them to loving them. And at last he became their fond, devoted slave. It is true that fear was to White Fang only *the beginning* of wisdom; but that is precisely what Solomon says. Afterwards the brave old wolf learned fearlessness; but the early lessons taught by fear were still of priceless value, for to courage they added caution; and courage wedded to caution is irresistible.

We are living in times that are wonderfully meek

and mild; and Fear, the stern old schoolmaster, is looked upon with suspicion. It is curious how we reverse the fashions of our ancestors. We flaunt in shameless abandon what they veiled in blushing modesty; but we make up for it by hiding what they had no hesitation in displaying. Our teeth, for example. It is considered the depth of impropriety to show your teeth nowadays, except in the sense in which actresses show them on post cards. But our forefathers were not afraid of showing their teeth, and they made themselves feared and honoured and loved in consequence. Yes, feared and honoured and loved; for I gravely doubt if any man ever yet taught others to honour and love him who had not first taught them on occasion to fear him.

The best illustration of what I mean occurs in the story of the Irish movement. In the politics of the last century there has been nothing so dramatic, nothing so pathetic, and nothing so tragic as the story of the rise and fall of Parnell. Lord Morley's tense and vivid chapters on that phase of modern statesmanship are far more thrilling and far more affecting than a similar number of pages of any novel in the English language. With the tragic fall of the Irish leader we need not now concern ourselves. But how are we to account for the meteoric rise of Parnell, and for the phenomenal power that he

wielded? For years he was the most effective figure in British politics. There is only one explanation; and it is the explanation upon which practically all the historians of that period agree. Charles Stewart Parnell made it the first article of his creed that he must make himself feared. His predecessor in the leadership of the Irish party was Isaac Butt. Mr. Butt believed in conciliation. He was opposed to 'a policy of exasperation.' He thought that, if the Irishmen in the House exercised patience, and considered the convenience of the two great political parties, they would appeal to the good sense of the British people and ensure the success of their cause. And in return—to quote from Mr. Winston Churchill's life of his father—the two great parties treated Mr. Butt and the Irish members with 'that form of respect which, being devoid of the element of fear, is closely akin to contempt.' Then arose Parnell. He held that the Irishmen must make themselves the terror of the nation. They must embarrass and confuse the English leaders, and throw the whole political machinery of both parties hopelessly out of gear. And in a few months Mr. Parnell made the Irish question the supreme question in the mind of the nation, and became for years the most hated and the most beloved personality on the parliamentary horizon. Nobody who knows the history of that troublous time can doubt that, but for the moral

shipwreck of Parnell, a shipwreck that nearly broke Mr. Gladstone's heart, the whole Irish question would have been settled, for better or for worse, twenty years ago. With the merits or demerits of his cause I am not now dealing; but everybody who has read Lord Morley's *Life of Gladstone* or Mr. Barry O'Brien's *Life of Parnell* must have been impressed by this striking and dramatic picture of a lonely and extraordinary man espousing an apparently hopeless cause, deliberately selecting fear as the weapon of his warfare, and actually leading his little band of astonished followers within sight of victory.

It is ridiculous to say that fear possesses no moral value. Whenever I hear that contention stated, my mind invariably swings back to a great story told by Sir Henry Hawkins in his *Reminiscences*. He is telling of his experiences under Mr. Justice Maule, and is praising the judicial perspicacity of that judge. In a certain murder case a boy of eight was called to give evidence, and counsel objected to so youthful a witness being heard. Mr. Justice Maule thought for a minute, and then beckoned the boy to the bench.

"'I should like to know,' His Honour observed, 'what you have been taught to believe. What will become of you, my little boy, when you die, if you are so wicked as to tell a lie?'"

'"Hell-fire!" answered the boy with great promptitude.

'"But do you mean to say," the judge went on, "that you would go to hell-fire for telling any lie?"

'"Hell-fire, sir!" the boy replied again.

'To several similar questions the boy made the same terrible response.

'"He does not seem to be competent," said the counsel.

'"I beg your pardon," returned the judge. "This boy thinks that for every wilful fault he will go to hell-fire; and he is very likely while he believes that doctrine to be most strict in his observance of truth. If you and I believed that such would be the penalty for every act of misconduct we committed, we should be better men than we are. Let the boy be sworn!"'

Sir Henry Hawkins tells the story with evident approval, so that we have here the valuable testimony of two distinguished judges to the moral value of fear from a purely judicial point of view. Of course, the value is not stable or permanent. The goodness that arises from fear is like the tameness of a terrified tiger, or the willingness of a wolf to leave the deer unharmed when both are flying from before a prairie-fire. When the fear passes, the blood-lust will return. But that is not the point. Nobody said that fear was wisdom. What the wise man said was that fear is *the beginning* of

wisdom. And as the beginning of wisdom it has a certain initial and preparatory value. The sooner that the beginning is developed and brought to a climax, the better of course it will be. But meanwhile a beginning is something. It is a step in the right direction. It is the learning of the alphabet. It is the earnest and promise of much that is to come.

Now if the Church refuses to employ this potent weapon, she is very stupid. A beginning is only a beginning, but it is a beginning. If we ignore the element of terror, we are deliberately renouncing a force which, in the wilds and in the world, is of really first-class value and importance. I am not now saying that the ministry would be untrue to its high calling if it failed to warn men with gravity and with tears. That is a matter of such sacredness and solemnity that I hesitate to touch it here; although it is obvious that, under any conceivable method of interpretation, there is a terrible note of urgency in the New Testament that no pulpit can decline, without grave responsibility, to echo. But I am content to point out here that, from a purely tactical point of view, the Church would be very foolish to scout this valuable weapon. The element of fear is one of the great primal passions, and to all those deep basic human elements the gospel makes its peculiar appeal. And the fears of

men must be excited. The music cannot be all bass; but the bass note must not be absent, or the music will be ruined.

There are still those who, far from being cowards, may, like Noah, be 'moved with fear' to the saving of their houses. Cardinal Manning tells in his Journal how, as a boy at Tetteridge, he read again and again of the lake that burneth with fire. 'These words,' he says, 'became fixed in my mind, and kept me as boy and youth and man in the midst of all evil. I owe to them more than will ever be known to the last day.' And Archbishop Benson used to tell of a working man who was seen looking at a placard announcing a series of addresses on 'The Four Last Things.' After he had read the advertisement he turned to a companion and asked, 'Where would you and I have been without hell?' And the Archbishop used to inquire whether, if we abandoned the legitimate appeal to human fear, we should not need some other motive in our preaching to fill the vacant place.

I know, of course, that all this may be misconstrued. But the wise will understand. The naturalist will not blame me, for fear is the life of the forest. The humanitarian can say no word of censure, for fear is intensely human. But the preacher who strikes this deep bass note must strike it very soulfully. No man should be able to speak

on such things except with a sob in his throat and tears in his eyes. We must warn men to flee from the wrath to come; but that wrath is the wrath of a Lamb. Andrew Bonar one day told Murray McCheyne that he had just preached a sermon on hell. 'And were you able to preach it with tenderness?' McCheyne wistfully inquired. Fear is part of that wondrous instrument on all the chords of which the minister is called at times to play; but this chord must be struck with trembling fingers.

No mistake can be more fatal than to set off this aspect of things against more attractive themes. All truth is related. Some years ago in Scotland an express train stopped abruptly on a curve in the time of a great flood. Just in front of the train was a roaring chasm from which the viaduct had been swept away. Just behind the train was the mangled frame of the girl who had warned the driver. *It is impossible to understand that sacrifice lying just behind the guard's van unless you have seen the yawning chasm just in front of the engine!*

'No fears, no grace!' said James.

'And this I took very great notice of,' said Mr. Greatheart, 'that the Valley of the Shadow of Death was as quiet while Mr. Fearing went through it as ever I knew it before or since; and when he came to the river without a bridge, I took notice of what was very remarkable; the water of that

river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life. So he went over at last, not much above wet shod.'

Fear had done its work, and done it well. The bass notes had proved the foundation of a music that blended at last with the very harmonies of heaven. Fear, even with White Fang, led on to love; and perfect love casteth out fear.

## VI

## A FRUITLESS DEPUTATION

It was in New Zealand, and I was attending my first Conference. I had only a month or two earlier entered the Christian ministry. I dreaded the Assembly of my grave and reverend seniors. With becoming modesty, I stole quietly into the hall and occupied a back seat. From this welcome seclusion, however, I was rudely summoned to receive the right hand of fellowship from the President. Then I once more plunged into the outer darkness of oblivion and obscurity. Here I remained until once again I was electrified at the sound of my own name. It seemed that the sorrows of dissension had overtaken a tiny church in a remote bush district. One of the oldest and most revered members, the father of a very large family and the leader of the little brotherhood, had intimated his intention of withdrawing from fellowship and of joining another denomination. This formidable

secession had thrown the little congregation into helpless confusion, and an appeal was made to the courts of the denomination. The letter was read; and the secretary stated briefly and succinctly the facts of the situation. And then, to my amazement, he closed by moving that Mr. William Forbury and myself be appointed a deputation to visit the district, to advise the church, and to report to Conference. Mr. Forbury, he explained, was a father in Israel. His grey hairs commanded reverence; whilst his ripe experience and sound judgement would be invaluable to the small and troubled community. So far, so good. His reasoning seemed irresistible. But he went on to say that he had included my name because I was an absolute stranger. I knew nothing of the internal disputes that had rent the church. My very freshness would give me a position of impartiality that older men could not claim. Moreover, he argued, the visit to a bush congregation, and the insight into its peculiar difficulties, would be a useful experience for me. I felt that I could not decently decline; but I confidently expected that the proposal would be challenged and probably rejected. To my astonishment, however, it was seconded and carried. And nothing remained but to arrange with Mr. Forbury the date of our delegation.

The day came, and we set out. It took the train just four hours to convey us to the lonely station from which we emerged upon a wilderness of green bush and a maze of muddy tracks. Mr. Forbury had visited the district frequently, and knew it well. We called upon several settlers in the course of the afternoon, taking dinner with one, and afternoon tea with another. And then we proceeded to the home of the seceder. The place seemed alive with young people. The house swarmed with children.

'How are you, John?' inquired my companion.

'Ah, William, glad to see you; how are you?'

They made an interesting study, these two old men. Their forms were bent with long years of hard and honourable toil. Their faces were rugged and weatherbeaten, wrinkled with age, and furrowed with care. They had come out together from the Homeland years and years ago. They had borne each other's burdens, and shared each other's confidences, through all the days of their pilgrimage. Their thoughts of each other were mingled with all the memories of their courtships, their weddings, and their earlier struggles. A thousand tender and sacred associations were interwoven, in the mind of each, with the name of the other. When fortune had smiled, they had

delighted in each other's prosperity. In times of shadow, each had hastened to the other's side. They had walked together, talked together, laughed together, wept together, and—very, very often—prayed together. They had been as David and Jonathan, and the soul of the one was knit to the soul of the other. Hundreds of times, before the one had come to settle in this new district, they had walked to the house of God in company. And now a matter of doctrine had intervened. And, with such men, a matter of doctrine is a matter of conscience. And a matter of conscience is the most stubborn of all obstacles to overcome. I looked into their stern, expressive faces, and I saw that they were no triflers. A fad had no charm for either of them. They looked into each other's faces, and each read the truth. The breach was irreparable.

We sat in the great farm kitchen until tea-time. I felt it was no business of mine to broach the affairs that had brought us. Several times I thought that Mr. Forbury was about to touch the matter. But each time it was adroitly avoided, and the conversation swerved off in another direction. Once or twice I felt half inclined to precipitate a discussion. Indeed, I was in the act of doing so when our hostess brought in the tea. A snowy cloth, home-made scones, delicious oat-cake, abundance

of cream—how tempting it all was! And how unattractive ecclesiastical controversy in comparison! We sat there in the twilight for what seemed like an age, talking of everything under the sun. Of everything, that is to say, save one thing only. And there brooded heavily over our spirits the consciousness that we were avoiding the one and only subject on which we were all really and deeply thinking.

After tea came family worship. I was invited to conduct it, and did so. After reading a psalm from the old farm Bible, we all kneeled together, the flickering flames of the great log-fire flinging strange shadows on the whitened wall and rafters as we rose and bowed ourselves. I caught myself attempting, even in prayer, to make obscure but fitting reference to the special circumstances that had brought us together. But the reticence of my companion was contagious. It was like a bridle on my tongue. The sadness of it all haunted me, and paralysed my speech; and I swerved off again at every threatened allusion. We sat on for awhile, they on either side of the roomy fireplace, and I between them, whilst the good woman and her daughters washed up the tea-things. The clatter of the dishes, and the babel of many voices, made it impossible for us to speak freely on the subject nearest our hearts. At length we rose

to go. I noticed, on the part of my two aged companions, a peculiar reluctance to separate. Each longed, yet dreaded, to speak. There was evidently so much to be said, and yet speech seemed so hopeless.

At last our friend said that he would walk a few steps with us. We said good-bye to the great household and set off into the night.

I shall never forget that walk! It was a clear, frosty evening. The moonlight was radiant. Every twig was tipped with silver. The smallest object could be seen distinctly. I watched the rabbits as they popped timidly in and out of the great gorse hedgerows. A hare went scurrying across the field. I felt all at once that I was an intruder. What right had I to be in the company of these two aged brethren in the very crisis of their lifelong friendship? No Conference on earth could vest me with authority to invade this holy ground! I made an excuse, and hurried on, walking some distance in front of them. But the night was so still that, even at that distance, had a word been uttered I must have heard it. I could hear the clatter of hoofs on the hard road two miles ahead. I could hear the dogs barking at a farmhouse twice as far away. I could hear a rabbit squealing in a trap on the fringe of the bush far behind us. But no word did I hear. For none was uttered. Side by side

they walked on and on in perfect silence. I once paused and allowed them to approach. They were crying like children. Stern old Puritans! They were built of the stuff that martyrs are made of. Either would have died a hundred deaths rather than have been false to conscience, or to truth, or to the other. Either would have died a hundred deaths to save the other from one. Neither could be coaxed or cowed into betraying one jot or tittle of his heart's best treasure. And each knew, whilst he trembled for himself, that all this was true of the other as well. Side by side they walked for miles in that pale and silvery moonlight. Not one word was spoken. Grief had paralysed their vocal powers; and their eyes were streaming with another eloquence. They wrung each other's hands at length, and parted without even saying good-night!

At the next Conference it was the junior member of the deputation who presented the report. He simply stated that the delegation had visited the district without having been able to reconcile the differences that had arisen in the little congregation. The Assembly formally adopted the report, and the deputation was thanked for its services. It seemed a very futile business. And yet one member of that deputation has always felt that life was strangely enriched by the happenings of that memorable night.

It puts iron into the blood to spend an hour with men to whom the claim of conscience is supreme, and who love truth with so deathless an affection that the purest and noblest of other loves cannot dethrone it.

## VII

## TRAMP! TRAMP! TRAMP!

### I

TRAMP! tramp! tramp! tramp! It was like the regular and rhythmic beat of a great machine. File after file, column after column, I watched the troops pass by. Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp! On they went, and on, and on; all in perfect time and step; tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp! It reminded me of that haunting passage that tells us that 'all these men of war that could keep rank came with a perfect heart to make David king over all Israel.' *They could keep rank!* It is a suggestive record. There is more in it than appears on the surface. *They could keep rank!* Right! Left! Right! Left! Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp! All these men of war *that could keep rank* came with a perfect heart to make David king over all Israel.

## II

Half the art of life lies in learning to keep step. It is a great thing—a very great thing—to be able to get on with other people. Let me indulge in a little autobiography. I once had a most extraordinary experience, an experience so altogether amazing that all subsequent experiences appear like the veriest commonplaces in comparison. The fact is, I was born. Such a thing had never happened to me before, and I was utterly bewildered. I did not know what to make of it. My first impression was that I was all alone and that I had the solar system all to myself. Like Robinson Crusoe, I fancied myself monarch of all I surveyed. But then, like Robinson Crusoe, I discovered a footprint, and found that the planet on which I had been so mysteriously cast was inhabited. There were two of us—myself and The Other Fellow.

As soon as I could devise means of locomotion, I set out, like Robinson Crusoe, to find out what The Other Fellow was like. I had a kind of instinct that sooner or later I should have to fight him. I found that he differed from me in one essential particular. He had hundreds of millions of heads; I had but one. He had hundreds of millions of feet; hundreds of millions of hands; hundreds of millions of ears and eyes; I had but two. But for

all that, it never occurred to me that he was greater than I. *Myself* always appeared to me to be vastly more important than *The Other Fellow*. It was nothing to me that he starved so long as I had plenty of food. It was nothing to me that he shivered so long as I was wrapped up snugly. I do not remember that it ever once crossed my mind in the first six months of my existence that it would be a bad thing if he died, with all his hundreds of millions of heads, and left me all alone upon the planet. I was first, and he was nowhere. I was everything, and he was nothing. Why, dear me, I must have cut my first teeth before it occurred to me that there was room on the planet for both of us; and I must have cut my wisdom teeth before I discovered that the world was on the whole more interesting to me because of his presence on it. And since then I have spent some pains, in a blundering, unskilful kind of a way, in trying to make myself tolerable to him. And the longer I live the more clearly I see that, although he is an odd fellow at times, he is very quick to respond to and reciprocate such advances. He is discovering, as I am, that walking in step has a pleasure peculiar to itself.

## III

I said a moment ago that half the art of life lies in learning to keep step. Conversely, half the

tragedy of life consists in our failure so to do. Here are Mr. and Mrs. Cardew. All lovers of Mark Rutherford know them well. They were both of them really excellent people; a minister and his wife; deeply attached to one another; and yet as wretched as wretched could be. How are you going to account for it? It is vastly important just because it is so common. Domestic difficulties rarely arise out of downright wickedness. Husband and wife may be as free from all outward fault as poor Mr. and Mrs. Cardew. Mark Rutherford thinks that Mr. Cardew was chiefly to blame, and his verdict is probably just. A man takes a considerably longer stride than a woman; but, for all that, it is still possible, even in these days of hobble skirts, for man and maid to walk in step, as all true lovers know. But it can only be managed by his moderating his ungainly stride to her more modest one, and, perhaps, by her unconsciously lengthening her step under the invigorating influence of his support. Which is a parable. Mark Rutherford says that 'Mr. Cardew had not learned the art of being happy with his wife; he did not know that happiness is an art; he rather did everything he could do to make the relationship intolerable. He demanded payment in coin stamped from his own mint, and if bullion and jewels had been poured before him he would have taken no heed of them.

He did not take into account that what his wife said and what she felt might not be the same; that persons who have no great command over language are obliged to make one word do duty for a dozen; and that, if his wife was defective at one point, there were in her whole regions of unexplored excellence, of faculties never encouraged, and an affection to which he offered no response.' There is more philosophy in the cunning way in which those happy lovers in the lane accommodate their strides to the comfort of each other than we have been accustomed to suspect. It is done very easily; it is done almost unconsciously; but they must be very careful to go on doing it long after they have left the leafy old lane behind them.

## IV

I do not mean to suggest that husbands and wives are sinners above all people on the face of the earth. By no means. Is there a club, a society, an office, or a church in the wide, wide world that does not shelter a most excellent individual whose one and only fault is that he cannot get on with anybody else? That is, of course, my way of putting it. It is not his. He would say that nobody else can get on with him. Which again takes our minds back to the troops. A raw Scotch lad joined the

expeditionary force, and on the first parade day his mother and sister came proudly down to see him march. Jock, sad to say, was out of step. At least that is my way of putting it. But it is not the only way. 'Look, mother!' said his fond sister, 'look, they're a' oot o' step but our Jock!' It is not for me to decide whether Jock is right or whether the others are. But since the others are all in step with each other, I am afraid the presumptive evidence is rather heavily against Jock. And Jock is well known to all of us. Nobody likes him, and nobody knows why they don't like him. In many respects he is a paragon of goodness. He loves his church, or he would not have stuck to it year in and year out as he has done. He is not self-assertive; he is quite willing to efface his own personality and be invisible. He is generous to a fault. Nobody is more eager to do anything for the general good. And yet nobody likes him. The only thing against him is that he has never disciplined himself to get on with other people. He has never tried to accommodate himself to their stride. He can't keep rank. They're a' oot o' step but our Jock! Poor Jock!

## V

I know that out of all this a serious problem emerges. The problem is this: why should Jock

destroy his own personality in order to render himself an exact replica of every other man in the regiment? Is individuality an evil thing that must be wiped out and obliterated? The answer to this objection is that Jock is not asked to sacrifice his personality; he is asked to sacrifice his angularity. The ideal of British discipline is, not to turn men into machines, but to preserve individuality and initiative; and yet, at the same time, to make each man of as great value to his comrades as is by any means possible. In the church we do the same. Brown means well, but he is all gush. You ask him to do a thing. 'Oh, certainly, with the greatest pleasure in the world!' But you have an awkward feeling that he will undertake a thousand other duties in the same airy way, and that the chances of his doing the work, and doing it well, are not rosy. Smith, on the other hand, is cautious. He, too, means well; but he is unduly scared of promising more than he can creditably fulfil; and, as a matter of fact, this bogy frightens him out of doing as much as he might and should. Now here you have Brown running and Smith crawling. You know perfectly well that Brown will exhaust himself quite prematurely, and that Smith will never get there. And between Brown's excited scamper and Smith's exasperating crawl the main host jogs along at a medium pace. Now Brown's personality

is a delightful thing. You can't help loving him. His willingness is charming, and his enthusiasm contagious. And Smith's steady persistence and extreme conscientiousness are most admirable. They do us all good. But if, whilst preserving and developing their personalities, we could strip them of their angularities, and get them to walk in step at one steady and regular pace—tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp!—we should surely stand a better chance of making David king over all Israel!

## VI

It is all a matter of discipline. The ploughman comes up from the country with a long ungainly stride. The city man, accustomed to crowded pavements, comes with a short and mincing step. They are drilled for a fortnight side by side, and away they go. Right! Left! Right! Left! Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp! The harmony is perfect. Jock must submit himself to the same rigid process of training. He may be firmly convinced that the stride of the regiment is too short or too long. But if, on that ground, he adopts a different one, nobody but his gentle and admiring little sister will believe that he is right and they are wrong. Jock's isolated attitude invariably reflects

upon himself. 'The whole regiment is out of step!' he declares, drawing attention to his different stride. That is too often the trouble with Jock. 'The members of our Church do not read the Bible!' he says. It may be sadly true; but it sounds, put in that way, like a claim that he is the one conscientious and regular Bible-reader among them. 'The members of our Church do not pray!' he exclaims sadly. It may be that a call to prayer is urgently needed; but poor Jock puts the thing in such a light that it appears to be a claim on his part that he alone knows the way to the Throne of Grace. 'Among the faithless faithful only he!' 'The members of our Church are not spiritually-minded!' he bemoans; but somehow, said as he says it, it sounds suspiciously like an echo of little Jack Horner's 'What a good boy am I!'

In the correspondence of Elizabeth Fry there occurs a very striking and suggestive passage. When Mrs. Fry began to meet with great success in her work among the English prisons, some of the Quakers feared that her triumphs would engender pride in her own soul and destroy her spirituality. At last the thing became nauseous and intolerable, and she wrote, 'The prudent fears that the good have for me try me more than most things, and I find that it calls for Christian forbearance not to be a little put out by them. I am confident that we

often see the Martha spirit of criticism enter in, even about spiritual things. *O Lord, enable us to keep our ranks in righteousness !'*

Tramp ! tramp ! tramp ! tramp !

VII

'And Enoch walked with God.'
'And Noah walked with God.'
'And Abraham walked with God.'
'And Moses walked with God.'
Tramp ! tramp ! tramp ! tramp !

'All these men of war *that could keep rank* came with a perfect heart to make David king over all Israel.'

'O Lord, enable us to keep our ranks in righteousness !'

## VIII

## THE FIRST MATE

'First officers are often worse than skippers,' remarked the night watchman in Mr. W. W. Jacobs' *Light Freights*. 'In the first place, they know they ain't skippers, and that alone is enough to put 'em in a bad temper, especially if they've 'ad their certificate a good many years, and can't get a vacancy.' I fancy there is something in the night watchman's philosophy; and I am therefore writing a word or two for the special benefit of first mates. I am half inclined to address it 'to first mates only,' for to second mates, third mates, and other inferior officers I have nothing to say. But the first mate evokes our sympathy on the ground that the night watchman states so forcibly, 'First mates know they ain't skippers, and that alone is enough to put 'em in a bad temper.' It is horribly vexatious to be next door to greatness. An old proverb tells us that a miss is as good as a mile; but like most

proverbs, it is as false as false can be. A mile is ever so much better than a miss.

I am fond of cricket, and am president of a certain club. I invariably attend the matches unless the house happens to be on fire. I have enough of the sporting instinct to be able to take defeat cheerfully —if the defeat falls within certain limits. It must not be so crushing as to be a positive humiliation, nor must it be by so fine a margin as to constitute itself a tantalization. Of the two, I prefer the former to the latter. The former can be dismissed under certain recognized forms. 'The glorious uncertainty of cricket!' you say to yourself. 'It's all in the game; and the best side in the world sometimes has an off day!' But, if, after a great struggle, you lose by a run, you go home thinking uncharitable thoughts of the bowler who might have prevented the other fellow from making a certain boundary hit, of the wicket-keeper who might have saved a bye, or of the batsman who might easily have got a few more runs if he hadn't played such a ridiculously fluky stroke. To be beaten by a hundred runs is bad, but bearable; to be beaten by an innings and a hundred runs is humiliating and horrible; to be beaten by a single run is exasperating and intolerable.

The same thing meets us at every turn. A few minutes ago I picked up the *Life of Lord Randolph*

*Churchill*, by his son. In the very first chapter there is a letter written by Dr. Creighton to the Duchess of Marlborough commiserating her ladyship on the fact that Lord Randolph had been placed in the second class at the December examinations at Oxford. 'I must own,' the Bishop writes, 'that I was sorry when I heard how narrowly Lord Randolph missed the first class; a few more questions answered, and a few more omissions in some of his papers, and he would have secured it. He was, I am told by the examiners, the best man who was put into the second class; and the great hardship is, as your Grace observes, that he should be in the same class with so many who are greatly his inferior in knowledge and ability. It is rather tantalizing to think that he came so near; *if he had been farther off I should have been more content.*' Now that is exactly the misery of the first mate. He is so near to being a skipper, so very near. He even carries continually in his pocket the official papers that certify that he is fully qualified to be a skipper. And yet, for all that, he is not a skipper. Sometimes, indeed, he fancies that he will never be a skipper. It is very trying. I am sorry—genuinely sorry—for the first mate. What can I say to help him?

Perhaps the thing that he will most appreciate is a reminder of the tremendous debt that the world owes to its first mates. I was reading the other day

Dasent's great *Life of Delane*. Among the most striking documents printed in these five volumes are the letters that Delane wrote from the seat of war during the struggle in the Crimea to the substitute who occupied his own editorial chair in the office of *The Times*. And the whole burden of those letters is to show that England was saved in those days by a first mate. 'The admiral,' he says in one letter, 'is by no means up to his position. The real commander is Lyons, who is just another Nelson—full of energy and activity.' Two days later, he says again, 'Nothing but the energy and determination of Sir E. Lyons overcame the difficulties and "impossibilities" raised by those who seem to have always a consistent objection to doing anything until their "to-morrow" shall arrive. All the credit is due to him, and to him alone, for our admiral never left his ship, which was anchored three miles from the shore, and contented himself with sending the same contingent of men and boats as the other ships.' And, writing again after the landing had been effected, Delane says, 'Remember always, that, in the great credit which the success of this landing deserves, Dundas has no share. Lyons has done all, and this in spite of discouragement such as a smaller man would have resented. Nelson could not have done better, and, indeed, his case at Copenhagen nearly resembles

this.' Here, then, is a feather in the cap of the first mate. He may often save a vital situation which, in the hands of a dilatory skipper, might easily have been lost. The skipper is skipper, and knows it. He is at the top of the tree, and there remains nothing to struggle after. He is apt to rest on his laurels and lose his energy. This subtle tendency is the first mate's opportunity. The ship must not be lost because the skipper goes to sleep. Everything, at such an hour, depends on the first mate.

Nor is it only in time of war and of crisis that the first mate comes to his own. In the arts of peace the selfsame principle holds good. What could our literature have done without the first mate? And in the republic of letters the first mate is usually a woman. It is only quite lately that women have, to any appreciable extent, applied themselves to the tasks and responsibilities of authorship. Until well into the eighteenth century, Mrs. Grundy scowled out of countenance any intrepid female who threatened to invade the sacred domain. In 1778, however, Miss Fanny Burney braved the old lady's wrath, published *Evelina*, and became the pioneer of a new epoch. One of these days, perhaps on the bi-centenary of that event, the army of women who wield the pen will erect a statue to the memory of that courageous and brilliant pathfinder.

When they do so, two memorable scenes in the life of their heroine will probably be represented in bas-relief upon the pedestal. The one will portray Miss Burney, hopeless of ever inducing a biased public to read a woman's work, making a bonfire of the manuscripts to which she had devoted such patient care. The other will illustrate the famous scene when Miss Burney danced a jig to Daddy Crisp round the great mulberry-tree at Chessington. It was, her diary tells us, the uncontrollable outcome of her exhilaration on learning of the praise which the great Dr. Johnson bestowed on *Evelina*. 'It gave me such a flight of spirits,' she says, 'that I danced a jig to Mr. Crisp, without any preparation, music, or explanation, to his no small amazement and diversion.' Macaulay declared that Miss Burney did for the English novel what Jeremy Collier did for the English drama; and she did it in a better way. 'She first showed that a tale might be written in which both the fashionable and the vulgar life of London might be exhibited with great force, and with broad comic humour, and which should yet contain not a single line inconsistent with rigid morality, or even with virgin delicacy. She took away the reproach which lay on a most useful and delightful species of composition.' Prejudice, however, dies hard; and the same writer tells us in another essay that

seventy years later, some reviewers were still of opinion that a lady who dares to publish a book renounces by that act the franchises appertaining to her sex, and can claim no exemption from the utmost rigour of critical procedure.

But, however strong may have been the prejudice against a woman becoming captain, and taking her place upon the bridge, nobody could object to her becoming first mate; and it is as first mate that woman has rendered the most valuable service. A few, like Fanny Burney and Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, may have become skippers; but we could better afford to lose all the works of such writers than lose the influence which women have exerted over captains whom they served in the capacity of first mate. It was a saying of Emerson's that a man is entitled to credit, not only for what he himself does, but for all that he inspires others to do. To no subject does this axiom apply with greater force than to this. It would be a fatal mistake to suppose that the contribution of women to the republic of letters begins and ends with the works that bear feminine names upon their title-pages. Our literature is adorned by a few examples of acknowledged collaboration between a man and a woman, and only in very rare instances is the woman the minor contributor. But, in addition to these, there are

innumerable records of men whose names stand in the foremost rank among our laureates and teachers yet whose work would have been simply impossible but for the woman in the background. From a host of examples that naturally rush to mind we may instance, almost at random, the cases of Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Robert Louis Stevenson. In the days of his restless youth, when Wordsworth was in danger of entangling himself in the military and political tumults of the time, it was his sister who recalled him to his desk and pointed him along the road that led to destiny. 'It is,' Miss Masson remarks, 'in moments such as this that men, especially those who feed on their feelings, become desperate, and think and do desperate acts. It was at this critical moment for Wordsworth that his sister Dorothy stepped into his life and saved him.' 'She soothed his mind,' the same writer says again, banished from it both contemporary politics and religious doubts, and infused instead love of beauty and dependence on faith, and so she re-awoke craving for poetic expression.'

> She, in the midst of all, preserved him still
> A poet; made him seek beneath that name,
> And that alone, his office upon earth.

Poor Dorothy! She accompanied her brother on more than half his wanderings; she pointed out

to him more than half the loveliness that is embalmed in his verses ; she suggested to him half his themes. As the poet himself confessed :

> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
> And humble cares, and delicate fears ;
> A heart, the fountain of sweet tears ;
> And love, and thought, and joy.

Yes, the world owes more than it will ever know to first mates as loyal and true and helpful as Dorothy Wordsworth. The skipper stands on the bridge and gets all the glory, but only he and the first mate know how much was due to the figure in the background. Think, too, of that bright spring day, nearly fifty years ago now, when a lady, driving through Hyde Park to see the beauty of the crocuses and the snowdrops, was seen to lurch suddenly forward in her carriage, and a moment after was found to be dead. ' It was a loss unspeakable in its intensity for Carlyle,' Mr. Maclean Watt says in his monograph. ' This woman was one of the bravest and brightest influences in his life, though, perhaps, it was entirely true that he was not aware of his indebtedness until the Veil of Silence fell between.' The skipper never is aware of his indebtedness to the first mate ; that is an essential feature of the relationship. It is the glory of the first mate that he works without thought of recognition or reward ; glad if he can keep the ship true

to her course; and ever proud to see the skipper crowned with all the glory. Carlyle's debt to his wife is one of the most tragic stories in the history of letters. 'In the ruined nave of the old Abbey Kirk,' the sage tells us, 'with the skies looking down on her, there sleeps my little Jeannie, and the light of her face will never shine on me more. I say deliberately her part in the stern battle (and except myself none knows how stern) was brighter and braver than my own.'

And in Stevenson's case the obligation is even more marked. 'What a debt he owed to women!' one of his biographers exclaims. 'In his puny, ailing infancy, his mother and his nurse Cummie had soothed and tended him; in his troubled hour of youth he had found an inspirer, consoler, and guide in Mrs. Sitwell to teach him belief in himself; in his moment of failure, and struggle with poverty and death itself, he had married a wife capable of being his comrade, his critic, and his nurse.' We owe all the best part of Stevenson's work to the presence by his side of a wife who possessed, as Sir Sidney Colvin testifies, 'a character as strong, interesting, and romantic as his own. She was the inseparable sharer of all his thoughts; the staunch companion of all his adventures; the most open-hearted of friends to all who loved him; the most shrewd and stimulating critic of his work;

and in sickness, despite her own precarious health, the most devoted and most efficient of nurses.'

Dorothy Wordsworth, Jane Carlyle, and Fanny Stevenson are representatives of a great host of brave and brilliant women without whom our literature would have been poor indeed. Some day we shall open a Pantheon in which we shall place splendid monuments to our first mates. At present we fill our Westminster Abbeys with the statues of skippers. But, depend upon it, injustice cannot last for ever. Some day the world will ask, not only, 'Was this man great?' but also, 'Who made this man so great?' And when this old world of ours takes it into its head to ask such questions, the day of the first mate will at last have dawned.

One other word ought to be said, although it seems a cruel kindness to say it. It is this. There are people who succeed brilliantly as first mates, but who fail ignominiously as skippers. Aaron is, of course, the classical example. As long as Moses was skipper, and Aaron first mate, everything went well. But Moses withdrew for awhile, and then Aaron took command. 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made a molten calf, and have worshipped

it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!' As long, I say, as Moses was skipper and Aaron first mate, Aaron did magnificently. But when Aaron took command, he was, as Dr. Whyte says, 'a mere reed shaken with the wind; as weak and as evil as any other man. Those forty days that Moses spent on the mount brought out, among other things, both Moses' greatness and Aaron's littleness and weakness in a way that nothing else could have done. "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for, as for this Moses, we know not what is become of him." And Aaron went down like a broken reed before the idolatrous clamour of the revolted people.' The day of judgement, depend upon it, will be a day of tremendous surprises. And not least among its astonishments will be the disclosure of the immense debt that the world owes to its first mates. And the first mates who never become skippers will in that great day understand the reason why. And when they know the reason why, they will be among the most thankful of the thankful. It will be so much better for me to be applauded at the last as a good and faithful first mate than to have to confess that, as skipper, I drove the vessel on the rocks.

# PART III

# I

## WHEN THE COWS COME HOME

I CAN see them now as they come, very slowly and in single file, down the winding old lane. The declining sun is shining through the tops of the poplars, the zest of daytime begins to soften into the hush and cool of evening, when they come leisurely sauntering through the grass that grows luxuriously beside the road. One after another they come quietly along—Cherry and Brindle, Blossom and Darkie, Beauty and Crinkle, Daisy and Pearl. A stranger watching them as they appear round the bend of the pretty old lane fancies each of them to be the last, and has just abandoned all hope of seeing another, when the next pair of horns makes its unexpected appearance. They never hurry home; they just come. A particularly tempting wisp in the long sweet grass under the hedge will induce an instant halt. The least thing passing along the road stops the whole procession; and they stare fixedly at the intruder till he is well on his way.

And then, with no attempt to make up for lost time, they jog along at the same old pace once more. It is good to watch them. When the whirl of life is too much for me; when my brain reels and my temples throb; when the hurry around me distracts my spirit and disturbs my peace; when I get caught in the tumult and the bustle and the rush —then I like to throw myself back in my chair for a moment and close my eyes. I am back once more in the dear old lane among the haws and the filberts. I catch once more the smell of the brier. I see again the squirrel up there in the oak and the rabbit under the hedge. I listen as of old to the chirp of the grasshopper in the stubble, to the hum of the bees among the foxgloves, to the song of the blackbird on the hawthorn, and, best of all—yes, best of all for brain unsteadied and nerve unstrung—I see the cows coming home.

It is a great thing to be able to believe the whole day long that, when evening comes, the cows will all come home. That is the faith of the milkmaid. As the day drags on she looks through the lattice window and catches occasional glimpses of Cherry and Brindle, Blossom and Darkie, Beauty and Crinkle, Daisy and Pearl. They are always wandering farther and farther away across the fields; but she keeps a quiet heart. In her deepest soul she cherishes a lovely secret. She knows that, when

the sunbeams slant through the tall poplar spires, the cows will all come home. She does not pretend to understand the mysterious instinct that will later on turn the faces of Cherry and Brindle towards her. She cannot explain the wondrous force that will direct Blossom and Darkie into the old lane, and guide them along its folds to the white gate down by the byre. But where she cannot trace she trusts. And all day long she clings to her sunny faith without wavering. She never doubts for a moment that the cows will all come home.

Is there anything in the wide world more beautiful than the confidence of a good woman in the salvation of her children? For years they cluster round her knee; she reads with them; prays with them; welcomes their childish confidences. Then, one by one, away they go! The heat of the day may bring waywardness, and even shame; but, like the milk-maid watching the cows through the lattice, she is sure they will all come home. Think of Susanna Wesley with her great family of nineteen children around her. What a wonderful story it is, the tale of her personal care and individual solicitude for the spiritual welfare of each of them! And what a picture it is that Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch has painted of the holy woman's deathbed! John arrives and is welcomed at the door by poor Hetty, the prodigal daughter.

'"The end is very near—a few hours perhaps!" Hetty tells him.

'"And she is happy?"

'"Ah, so happy!" Hetty's eyes brimmed with tears and she turned away.

'"Sister, that happiness is for you, too. Why have you, alone of us, so far rejected it?"

'Hetty stepped to the door with a feeble gesture of the hands. She knew that, worn as he was with his journey, if she gave him the chance he would grasp it and pause, even while his mother panted her last, to wrestle for and win a soul—not because she, Hetty, was his sister, but simply because hers was a soul to be saved. Yes, and she foresaw that sooner or later he would win; that she would be swept into the flame of his conquest. She craved only to be let alone; she feared all new experience; she distrusted even the joy of salvation. Life had been too hard for Hetty.' And on another page we have an extract from Charles's journal. 'I prayed by my sister, a gracious, tender, trembling soul; a bruised reed which the Lord will not break.'

The cows had all come home. The milkmaid's faith had not failed.

The happiest people in the world, and the best, are the people who go through life as the milkmaid goes through the day, believing that before night the cows will all come home. It is a faith that does not

lend itself to apologetics, but, like the coming of the cows, it seems to work out with amazing regularity. It is what Myrtle Reed would call 'a woman's reasoning.' It is *because* it is. The cows will all come home *because* the cows will all come home.

'Good wife, what are you singing for? you know we've lost the hay,
And what we'll do with horse and kye is more than I can say;
While, like as not, with storm and rain, we'll lose both corn and wheat.'
She looked up with a pleasant face, and answered low and sweet,
'There is a Heart, there is a Hand, we feel but cannot see;
We've always been provided for, and we shall always be.'

'That's like a woman's reasoning, we must because we must!'
She softly said, 'I reason not, I only work and trust;
The harvest may redeem the hay, keep heart whate'er betide;
When one door's shut I've always found another open wide.
There is a Heart, there is a Hand, we feel but cannot see
We've always been provided for, and we shall always be.'

The fact is that the milkmaid has a kind of understanding with Providence. She is in league with the Eternal. And Providence has a way of its own of keeping faith with trustful hearts like hers. I was reading the other day Commander J. W. Gambier's *Links in my Life*, and was amused

at the curious inconsistency which led the author first to sneer at Providence and then to bear striking witness to its fidelity. As a young fellow the Commander came to Australia and worked on a way-back station, but he had soon had enough. 'I was to try what fortune could do for a poor man; but I believed in personal endeavour and the recognition of it by Providence. *I did not know Providence.*'

'I did not know Providence!' sneers our young bushman.

'The cows will all come home,' says the happy milkmaid.

But on the very same page that contains the sneer Commander Gambier tells this story. When he was leaving England the old cabman who drove him to the station said to him, 'If you see my son Tom in Australia, ask him to write home and tell us how he's getting on.' 'I explained,' the Commander tells us, 'that Australia was a big country, and asked him if he had any idea of the name of the place his son had gone to. He had not.' As soon as Commander Gambier arrived at Newcastle, in New South Wales, he met an exceptionally ragged ostler. As the ostler handed him his horse, Mr. Gambier felt an irresistible though inexplicable conviction that this was the old cabman's son. He felt absolutely sure of it; so he said:

'Your name is Fowles, isn't it?'

He looked amazed, and seemed to think that his questioner had some special reason for asking him, and was at first disinclined to answer. But Mr. Gambier pressed him and said, 'Your father, the Cheltenham cab-driver, asked me to look you up.'

He then admitted that he was the man, and Mr. Gambier urged him to write to his father. All this on the selfsame page as the ugly sneer about Providence!

And a dozen pages farther on I came upon a still more striking story. Commander Gambier was very unfortunate, very homesick, and very miserable in Australia. He could not make up his mind whether to stay here or return to England. 'At last,' he says, 'I resolved to *leave it to fate.*' The only difference that I can discover between the '*Providence*' whom Commander Gambier could not trust, and the '*fate*' to which he was prepared to submit all his fortunes, is that the former is spelt with a capital letter and the latter with a small one! But to the story. 'On the road where I stood was a small bush grog-shop, and the coaches pulled up here to refresh the ever-thirsty bush traveller. At this spot the up-country and down-country coaches met, and I resolved that I would get into whichever came in first, *leaving it to destiny* to settle.

Looking down the long, straight track over which the up-country coach must come, I saw a cloud of dust, and well can I remember the curious sensation I had that I was about to turn my back upon England for ever! But in the other direction a belt of scrub hid the view, the road making a sharp turn. And then, almost simultaneously, I heard a loud crack of a whip, and round this corner, at full gallop, came the down coach, pulling up at the shanty not three minutes before the other! I felt like a man reprieved, for my heart was really set on going home; and I jumped up into the down coach with a great sense of relief!' And thus Mr. Gambier returned to England, became a Commander in the British Navy, and one of the most distinguished ornaments of the service. He sneers at '*Providence*,' yet trusts to '*fate*,' and leaves everything to '*destiny*'! The milkmaid's may be an inexplicable confidence; but this is an inexplicable confusion. Both are being guided by the same Hand—the Hand that leads the cows home. She sees it and sings. He scouts it and sneers. That is the only difference.

Carlyle spent the early years of his literary life, until he was nearly forty, among the mosshags and isolation of Craigenputtock. It was, Froude says, the dreariest spot in all the British dominions. The house was gaunt and hungry-looking, standing

like an island in a sea of morass. When he felt the lure of London, and determined to fling himself into its tumult, he took 'one of the biggest plunges that a man might take.' But in that hour of crisis he built his faith on one great golden word. 'All things work together for good to them that love God,' he wrote to his brother. And, later on, when his mother was in great distress at the departure of her son, Alick, for America, Carlyle sent her the same text. 'You have had much to suffer, dear mother,' he wrote, 'and are grown old in this Valley of Tears; but you say always, as all of us should say, "Have we not many mercies too?" Is there not above all, and in all, a Father watching over us, through whom all sorrows shall yet work together for good? Yes, it is even so. Let us try to hold by *that* as an anchor both sure and steadfast.' Which is another way of saying, 'It is all right, mother mine. Let them wander as they will whilst the sun is high; when it slants through the poplars the cows will all come home!'

The homeward movement of the cows is part of the harmony of the universe. Man himself goeth forth, the psalmist says, unto his work and to his labour until the evening. Until the evening—and then, like the cows, he comes home. It is this sense of harmony between the coming of the cows on the one hand, and all their environment on the other,

that gave Gray the opening thought for his 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard':

> The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
> The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
> The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
> And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Here are two pictures—the tired ploughman and the lowing herd both coming home; and the two together make up a perfect harmony. It is a stroke of poetic genius. We are made to feel the weariness of the tired ploughman in order that we may be able to appreciate the restfulness of the evening, the solitude of the quiet churchyard, and the cows coming slowly home. I blamed myself at the beginning for sometimes getting caught in the fever and tumult of life; but then, if I never knew such exhausting experiences, I should never be able to enjoy the delicious stillness of the evening, I should never be able to see the beauty of the herd winding so slowly o'er the lea. It is just because the ploughman has toiled so hard, and done his work so well, that his weariness blends so perfectly with the restfulness of the dusk. For it is only those who have bravely borne the burden and heat of the day who can relish the sweetness and peace of the twilight. It is a man's duty to keep things in their right place. I do not mean merely that he should keep his

hat in the hall, and his book on the shelf. I mean that, as far as possible, a man ought to keep his toil to the daylight, and his rest to the dusk.

Dr. Chalmers held that our three-score years and ten are really seven decades corresponding with the seven days of the week. Six of them, he said, should be spent in strenuous endeavour. But the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, and should be spent in Sabbatic quiet. That ideal is not always capable of realization. For the matter of that, it is not always possible to abstain from work on the Lord's Day. But it is good to keep it before us as an ideal. We may at least determine that, on the Sunday, we will perform only deeds of necessity and mercy. And, in the same way, we may resolve that we will leave as little work as possible to be done in the twilight of life. It was one of the chiefest of the prophets who told us that 'it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.' If I were the director of a life insurance company, I should have that great word blazoned over the portal of the office. If, by straining an extra nerve in the heyday of his powers, a man may ensure to himself some immunity from care in the evening, he is under a solemn obligation to do so. The weary ploughman has no right to labour after the cows come home.

For, in some respects, the sweetest part of the day follows the coming of the cows. I have a notion that

most of the old folk would say so. During the day they fancied that the cows had gone, to return no more. But they all came home. 'And now,' says old Margaret Ogilvy, 'and now it has all come true like a dream. I can call to mind not one little thing I ettled for in my lusty days that hasna' been put into my hands in my auld age. I sit here useless, surrounded by the gratification of all my wishes and all my ambitions; and at times I'm near terrified, for it's as if God had mista'en me for some other woman.' They wandered long, that is to say, and they wandered far. But they all came home—Cherry and Brindle, Blossom and Darkie, Beauty and Crinkle, Daisy and Pearl—they all came home. Happy are all they who sing in their souls the milk-maid's song, and never, never doubt that, when the twilight gathers round them, the cows will all come home!

## II

## MUSHROOMS ON THE MOOR

Mr. G. K. Chesterton does not like mushrooms. That is the most arresting fact that I have gleaned from reading, carefully and with delight, his *Victorian Age in Literature*. In his treatment of Dickens, he writes very contemptuously of 'that Little Bethel to which Kit's mother went,' and he likens it to '*a monstrous mushroom* that grows in the moonshine and dies in the dawn.' Now no man who was really fond of the esculent and homely fungus would have employed such a metaphor by way of disparagement. I can only infer that Mr. Chesterton thinks mushrooms very nasty. His opinion of Little Bethel does not concern me. It is neither here nor there. But Mr. Chesterton does not like *mushrooms*! I cannot get over that!

I feel very sorry for Mr. Chesterton. It is not merely a matter of taste. I would not presume to set my opinion in a matter of this kind over against his. But the authorities are with me. I have looked up the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and its opening sentence on the subject affirms that 'there are few more delicious members of the vegetable kingdom than the common mushroom.' I suppose that in these matters association has a lot to do with it. I cannot forget those delicious summer mornings in England when we boys, rising with the lark, stole out of the house like so many burglars, and scampered with our baskets across the fragrant meadows to gather the white buttons that dotted the sparkling, dew-drenched grass. It was, as I have said in the introduction to this book, a large part of childhood's radiant romance! What tales our fancy wove into the fairy-rings under the elm-trees! We lifted each moist fungus half expecting to see the brownies and the elves fly from beneath it! And what fearsome care we took to include no single hypocritical toadstool among our treasures! I am really afraid that Mr. Chesterton would have been less conscientious. Mushrooms and toadstools are all alike to him. He can never have had such frolics in the fields as we enjoyed in those ecstatic summer mornings. And he never, therefore, knew the fierce joy of the breakfast that followed when, hungry

as hunters, we returned with flushed faces to feast upon the spoils of our boisterous foray. Over such brave memories Mr. Chesterton cannot fondly linger. For Mr. Chesterton does not like mushrooms.

What would the Harvester have said to Mr. Chesterton? For, to Gene Stratton Porter's hero, mushrooms were half-way to destiny. 'In the morning, brilliant sunshine awoke him, and he arose to find the earth steaming.

'"If ever there was a perfect mushroom morning!" he said to his dog. "We must hurry and feed the stock and ourselves, and gather some!" The Harvester breakfasted, fed the stock, hitched Betsy to the spring wagon, and went into the dripping, steamy woods. If any one had asked him that morning concerning his idea of heaven, he would never have dreamed of describing gold-paved streets, crystal pillars, jewelled gates, and thrones of ivory. He would have told you that the woods on a damp sunny May morning was heaven. He only opened his soul to beauty, and steadily climbed the hill to the crest, and then down the other side to the rich, half-shaded, half-open spaces, where big, rough mushrooms sprang in a night.'

Yes, a mushroom morning was heaven to the Harvester. And it was the mushrooms that led him the first step of the way towards the discovery

of his dream-girl. The mushrooms represented the first of those golden stairs by which he climbed to his paradise. And Mr. Chesterton does not like mushrooms! What would the Harvester have said to Mr. Chesterton?

One faint, struggling glimmer of hope I am delighted to discover. Mr. Chesterton likens *Little* Bethel to a *monstrous* mushroom. There can be only one reason for this inartistic mixture of analogy and antithesis. Mr. Chesterton evidently knows that a large mushroom is not so sweet or so toothsome as a small one. A '*monstrous* mushroom,' even to those who like mushrooms, is coarse and less tasty. Now the gleam of hope lies in the circumstance that Mr. Chesterton knows the fine gradations of niceness (or nastiness) that distinguish mushrooms of one size from mushrooms of another. As a rule, if you get to know a thing, you get to like it. Mr. Chesterton is coming to know mushrooms. He will soon be ordering them for breakfast. He may even come, like certain tribes mentioned in the *Encyclopaedia*, to eat nothing else! And by that time he may have come to know Little Bethel. And if he comes to know it, he may come to like it. He will still liken it to a mushroom. But we shall be able to tell, by the way he says it, that he means that it is very good. We shall see at once that Mr. Chesterton likes mushrooms. At present, however,

the stern fact remains. Mr. Chesterton does *not* like mushrooms. Richard Jefferies, in his *Amateur Poacher*, says that mushrooms are good either raw or cooked. The great naturalist is therefore altogether on the side of the *Encyclopaedia*. 'Some eat mushrooms raw, fresh as taken from the ground, with a little salt; but to me the taste is then too strong.' Perhaps that is how Mr. Chesterton has taken his mushrooms—*and Little Bethel*! 'Of the many ways of cooking mushrooms,' Richard Jefferies goes on, 'the simplest is the best; that is, on a gridiron.' Mr. Chesterton gives the impression that that is precisely how he would prefer his mushrooms—*and Little Bethel*! For Mr. Chesterton does not like mushrooms.

The really extraordinary feature of the whole thing is that I like mushrooms all the better for the very reason that leads Mr. Chesterton to pour upon them his most withering and pitiless contempt. He hates them because they spring up in the night. Little Bethel is a 'monstrous mushroom that grows in the moonshine.' It is perfectly true that Little Bethel, like the mushrooms, flourished in the darkness. Like Mark Tapley, she was at her brightest when her surroundings were most dreary. In this respect both the meeting-house and the mushrooms are in excellent company. Many fine things grow in the night. Indeed, Sir James

Crichton-Browne, the great doctor, in his lecture on 'Sleep,' argues that all things that grow at all grow in the night. Night is Nature's growing-time. Now Michael Fairless shared Richard Jefferies' fondness for mushrooms. Every reader of *The Roadmender* will recall the night in the woods. 'Through the still night I heard the nightingales calling, calling, calling, until I could bear it no longer, and went softly out into the luminous dark. The wood was manifold with sound. I heard my little brothers who move by night rustling in grass and tree; and above and through it all the nightingales sang and sang and sang! The night wind bent the listening trees, and the stars yearned earthwards to hear the song of deathless love. Louder and louder the wonderful notes rose and fell in a passion of melody, and then sank to rest on that low thrilling call which it is said Death once heard and stayed his hand. At last there was silence. The grey dawn awoke and stole with trailing robes across earth's floor. Gathering a pile of mushrooms —*children of the night*—I hasten home.'

The nightingales—the *singers* of the night!

The mushrooms—the *children* of the night!

These *singers* of the night, and these '*children* of the night,' almost remind me of Faber:

> Angels of Jesus, angels of light,
> Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night!

But Mr. Chesterton does not like 'the *children* of the night.'

Now we must really learn better manners. It will not do to treat things contemptuously either because they spring up suddenly, or because they spring up in the night. In this matter we Australians live in glass houses and must not throw stones. Mr. Chesterton is treading on our pet corns. For Australia and America are the two most 'monstrous mushrooms' on the face of the earth! Like the nations of which the prophet wrote, they were 'born in a day.' Think of what happened in America in the ten short years between 1830 and 1840! No nation in the history of the world can produce so astounding a record! In 1830 America had 23 miles of railway; in 1840 she had 800. In 1830 the country presented all the wilder characteristics of early colonial settlement; in 1840 it was a great and populous nation. In 1830 Chicago was a frontier fort; in 1840 Chicago was a city. In 1830 the population of Michigan was 32,000; in 1840 it was 212,000. It was during this sensational decade, too, that the first steamships crossed the Atlantic. And the spirit of the age reflected itself in the literary wealth of which America became possessed at that extraordinary time. Whittier and Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emerson and

Bancroft, Poe and Prescott, all arose during that eventful period, and made for themselves names that have become classical and immortal. Here is a monstrous mushroom for you! Or, to pass from the things of yesterday to the things of to-day, see how, under the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, Canadian cities are in our own time shooting up with positively incredible swiftness. No, no; Mr Chesterton must not speak disparagingly of mushrooms!

And look at the rapidity at which these young nations beneath the Southern Cross sprang into existence! I remember standing on the sea-shore in New Zealand talking to a couple of old whalers, who told me of the times they spent before the first emigrant ships arrived, when they were the only white men for hundreds of miles around. And now! Why, in their own lifetime these men had seen a great nation spring into being! Here, I say again, are mushrooms for you!

But do mushrooms really spring up as suddenly as they appear to do? Dan Crawford tells us that, in Central Africa, if a young missionary attempts to prove the existence of God, the natives laugh, and, pointing to the wonders of Nature around, exclaim, '*No rain, no mushrooms!*' In effect they mean to say, without some adequate cause, If there were no God, whence came the forest and the fauna? Now

that African proverb is very suggestive. 'No rain, no mushrooms.' The mushroom, that is to say, has its roots away back in old rainstorms, in fallen forests, and in ancient climatic experiences too subtle to trace. I have been reading Dr. Cooke's text-book, and he and Mr. Cuthill have convinced me that it takes about a million years to grow a mushroom. The conditions out of which the fungus suddenly springs are as old as the world itself. And that same consideration saves America and Australia from contempt. For both America and Australia —these mushroom nations—are very, very old. Dr. Stanley Hall, the President of the Clark University, was speaking on this aspect of things the other day. 'In a very pregnant psychological sense,' he said, 'ours is an unhistoric land. Our very constitution had a Minerva birth.' (That is a classical way of saying that it had a mushroom birth.) 'Our literature, customs, fashions, institutions, and legislation were inherited or copied, and our religion was not a gradual indigenous growth, but both its spirit and its forms were imported ready-made from Holland, Rome, England, and Palestine. No country is so precociously old for its years.' It follows, therefore, that Australia is as old as the Empire. And the Empire has its roots away back where the first man delved. We must not allow ourselves to be duped by the trickery of appearances.

These new things are very ancient. 'How long did it take you to paint that picture?' somebody asked Sir Joshua Reynolds. '*All my life!*' he replied.

Anybody can grow fine flowers in the daytime. But what can you grow in the dark? *That* is the challenge of the mushrooms—*what can you grow in the dark?* 'The nights are the test!' as Charlotte Brontë used to say. When things were as black as black could be, poor Charlotte wrote: 'The days pass in a slow, dark march; the nights are the test; the sudden wakings from restless sleep, the revived knowledge that one sister lies in her grave, and another not at my side, but in a separate and sick-bed. *The nights are the test.*' They are indeed. Tell me: Can you grow faith, and restfulness, and patience, and a quiet heart in the darkness? If so, you will never speak contemptuously of mushrooms again.

Why, dear me, some of the very finest things in this world of ours spring up suddenly, like the mushroom, and spring up in the dark! Dean Hole used to tell how he became a preacher. For years he could not lift his eyes from his manuscript. Then, one Sunday evening, the light suddenly failed. His manuscript was useless, and he found himself speaking heart to heart to his people. The eloquence for which he was afterwards famed appeared in a

moment, and appeared in the dark! And I am very fond of that story of the old American soldier. He was stone blind, but very happy, and always wore his medal on his breast.

'What do you do in these days of darkness?' somebody asked him.

'Do?' he replied almost scornfully. 'Why, I thank God that for fifty years I had the gift of sight. I saw Abraham Lincoln, and heard the bugles call for the victory of Truth and Righteousness. I go back to those scenes now, and realize them anew. I have lost my sight, but *memory has been born again in the dark.*'

If, therefore, we allow mushrooms to be treated with contempt, simply because they spring up suddenly, and spring up in the night, we shall soon find other beautiful things, much more precious, brought under the same cruel condemnation. And what of a sudden conversion? Think of *Down in Water Street*, and *Broken Earthenware*, and *Varieties of Religious Experience*! What of that tremendous happening on the road to Damascus? The Philippian jailer, too! See him, with a grim smile of satisfaction, locking the apostles in their terrible dungeon; yet before the night is through, he is tenderly bathing their stripes and ministering to them with all the gentle graces of Christian courtesy and compassion! 'A monstrous mushroom that

grew in the night,' would you call it? At any rate, it did not die with the dawn. 'Minerva births' these, with a vengeance. As for me, I have nothing but reverence for the mushrooms. They are among the wonders of a very wondrous world.

## III

## ONIONS

JUST along the old rut-riddled road that winds through the bush on its way to Bulman's Gully there lives a poor old man who fancies that he is of no use in the world. I am going to send him an onion. I am convinced that it will cure him of his most distressing malady. I shall wrap it up in tissue paper, pack it in a dainty box, tie it with silk ribbons, and post it without delay. No gift could be more appropriate. The good man's argument is very plausible, but an onion will draw out all its defects. He thinks, because he never hears any voice trumpeting his fame or chanting his praise, that he is therefore without any real worth or value to his fellow men. Could anything be more preposterous? Who ever heard a panegyric in praise of onions? At what concert was the song of the onion sung? Roses and violets, daisies and daffodils, are the theme of every warbler; but when

does the onion come in for adulation? Run through your great poets and show me the epic, or even the sonnet, addressed to the onion! Are we, therefore, to assume that onions have no value in a world like this? What a wealth of appetizing piquancy would vanish from our tables if the onion were to come no more! As a relish, as a food, and as a medicine, the onion is simply invaluable; yet no orator ever loses himself in rhetorical transports in honour of onions! It is clearly not safe to assume that because we are not much praised, we are therefore of not much profit. And so I repeat my suggestion that if any man is known to be depressed over his apparent uselessness, it would be a service to humanity in general, and to that member of the race in particular, to post him an onion.

'I always bless God for making anything so strong as an onion!' exclaimed William Morris, in a fine and characteristic burst of fervour. That is the point: an onion is so strong. The very strength of a thing often militates against applause. If a strong man lifted a bag of potatoes we should think no more about it; but if a schoolboy picked it up and ran off with it we should be speechless with amazement. We take the strength of the strong for granted; it is the strength of the weak that we applaud. If a man is known to be good or useful or great, we treat his goodness or usefulness

or greatness as one of the given factors of life's intricate problem, and straightway dismiss it from our minds. It is when goodness or usefulness or greatness breaks out in unexpected places or in unexpected people that we vociferously shout our praise. We applaud the singers at a concert because it appeals to us as such an amazing and delightful incongruity that so practical and prosaic a creature as Man should suddenly burst into melody; but when the angels sang at Bethlehem the shepherds never thought of clapping. The onion is therefore in company with the angels. I am not surprised that the Egyptians accorded the onion divine honours and carved its image on their monuments.

I am prepared to admit that onions do not move in the atmosphere of sentiment and of poetry. Tears have been shed over onions, as every housewife knows. Shakespeare speaks of the tears that live in an onion. But, as Shakespeare implies, they are crocodile tears—without tenderness and without emotion. Old John Wolcott, the satirist, tells how

> . . . . . Master Broadbrim
> Pored o'er his father's will and dropped the onioned tear.

And Bernard Shaw writes of 'the undertaker's handkerchief, duly onioned with some pathetic phrase.' No, onions do not lend themselves to

passion or to pathos. You would scarcely decorate the church with onions for your sister's wedding, or plant a row of onions on a hero's grave. And yet I scarcely know why. For, in a suitable setting, a touch of warm romance may light up even so apparently prosaic a theme. The coming of the swallows in the spring is scarcely a more delightful event in Cornwall than the annual arrival of the onion-sellers from Brittany. What a picturesque world we invade when we get among those dreamy old fishing-villages that dot the Cornish coast!

> Gold mists upon the sea and sky,
> The hills are wrapped in silver veils,
> The fishing-boats at anchor lie,
> Nor flap their idle orange sails.

The wild and rugged sea-front is itself suggestive of rich romance and reminiscent of bold adventure. The smugglers, the pirates, the wreckers, and the Spanish mariners knew every bluff and headland perfectly. And, however the world beyond may have changed, these tiny hamlets have triumphantly defied the teeth of time. They know no alteration. The brogue of the people is strange but rhythmic, and, though pleasant to hear, very hard for ordinary mortals to understand. The fisherfolk, with their strapping and stalwart forms, their bronzed and weather-beaten features, their dark, idyllic eyes,

their tanned and swarthy skins, their odd and old-world garb, together with their general air of being the daughters of the ocean and the sons of the storm, seem to be a race by themselves. And he who tarries long enough among them to become infected by the charm of their secluded and well-ordered lives knows that one of the events of their uneventful year is the coming of the onion-sellers from over the sea. The historic connexion between Cornwall and Brittany is very ancient, and is a romance in itself. The English and French coasts, as they face each other there, are very much alike—broken, precipitous, and grand. The peoples live pretty much the same kind of lives on either side of the Channel. And when the onion-sellers come from France they are greeted with enthusiasm by the Cornish people, and although they speak their own tongue, they are perfectly understood. See! there is one of the Breton onion-sellers lounging among a knot of fishermen near the door of yonder picturesque old Cornish cottage, whilst the wife stands in the open doorway, arms a-kimbo, listening as the foreigner tells of the things that he has seen across the Channel since last he visited this coast. And up the hill there, on the rickety old settle, beneath the creaking signboard of the village inn, is another such group. As I gaze upon these masculine but kindly faces I am half inclined to

withdraw my too hasty admission that onions have nothing about them of sentiment, poetry, or romance.

It always strikes me as a funny thing about onions that, however fond a man may be of the onions themselves, he detests things that are *oniony*. Give him onions, and he will devour them with magnificent relish. But, through some slip in the kitchen, let his porridge or his tea taste of onions, and his wry face is a sight worth seeing! A friend of mine keeps a large apiary. One summer he was in great glee at the immense stores of honey that his bees were collecting. Then, one dreadful day, he tasted it. The dainty little square of comb, oozing with the exuding fluid, was passed round the table. Horror sat upon every face! It turned out that the bees had discovered a large onion plantation some distance away, and had gathered their heavy stores from that odorous and tainted source! What could be more abominable, even to a lover of onions, than oniony honey? We remember Thackeray and his oniony sandwiches. Now why is it possible for me to love onions and to hate all things oniony? The fact is that the world has a few vigorous, decided, elementary things that absolutely decline to be modified or watered down. 'Onions is onions!' as a well-known character in fiction remarked on a memorable occasion, and

there is a world of significance in the bald assertion. There are some things that are as old as the world, and as universal as man, and that are too vivid and pronounced to humble their pride or compromise their own distinctive glory. The exquisite shock of the bather as his naked body plunges into the flowing tide; the instinctive recoil on seeing for the first time a dead human body; the delicious thrill with which the lover presses for the first time his lady's lips; the terrifying roar of a lion, the flaunting scarlet of a poppy, and the inimitable flavour of an onion—these are among the world's most familiar quantities, the things that decline to be modified or changed. You might as well ask for an ice-cream with the chill off as ask for a diluted edition of any of these vivid and primitive things. Onions may be regarded by a man as simply delicious, but oniony honey or oniony tea! The bather's plunge is a rapture to every stinging and startled nerve in his body, but to stand ankle-deep in the surf, shivering with folded arms in the breeze that scatters the spray! Life is full of delightful things that are a transport to the soul if we take them as they are, but that become a torment and an abomination if we water them down. And it is just because Christianity itself is so distinctive, so outstanding, so boldly pronounced a thing, that we insist on its being unadulterated. Even a worldling

feels that a Christian, to be tolerable, must be out and out. The man who waters down his religion is like the shivering bather who, feeling the cold, cold waters tickling his toes, cannot muster up the courage to plunge; he is like the man who wants an ice-cream with the chill off; he is like oniony honey or oniony tea!

A man cannot, of course, live upon onions. Onions have their place and their purpose, and, as I have said, are simply invaluable. But they must be kept to that place and to that purpose. The modern tendency is to eat nothing but onions. We are fast becoming the victims of a perfect passion for piquancy. Time was when we expected our newspapers to tell us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We don't care a rap about the truth now, so long as they'll give us a thrill. We must have onions. We used to demand of the novelist a love-story; now he must be morbidly sexual and grimly sensational. Our grandfathers went to a magic lantern entertainment and thought it a furious frolic. And on Sundays they prayed, 'From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us!' Their grandchildren pray, 'From all churches and chapels, Good Lord, deliver us!' And, during the week, they like to see all the blood-curdling horrors

of lightning and tempest; of plague, pestilence, and famine; of battle, murder, and of sudden death, enacted before their starting eyes with never a flicker to remind them that the film is only a film. The dramas, the dances, and the dresses of the period fortify my contention. The cry is for onions, and the stronger the better. It is not a healthy sign. Mr. H. G. Wells, in his graphic description of the changes that overcame Bromstead, and turned it from green fields into filthy slums, says that he noticed that 'there seemed to be more boards by the railway every time I passed, advertising pills and pickles, tonics and condiments, and such-like solicitudes of a people with no natural health or appetite left in them.' The pills, that is to say, kept pace with the pickles. The more pickles Bromstead ate, the more pills Bromstead wanted. That is the worst of the passion for piquancy. The soul grows sick if fed on sensations. Onions are splendid things, but you cannot live upon onions. Pickles inevitably lead to pills.

But that is not all. For the trouble is that, if I develop an inordinate appetite for onions, I lose all relish for more delicately flavoured foods. The most impressive instance of such a dietary tragedy is recorded in my Bible. 'The children of Israel wept and said, "We remember the *onions*, but now there is nothing except *this manna* before our eyes!"'

Onions seem to have a special connexion with Egypt. Herodotus tells us that the men who built the Pyramids fed upon onions, although the priests were forbidden to touch them. 'We remember the onions!' cried the children of Israel, looking wistfully back at Egpyt, 'but now we have nothing but this manna!' The onions actually destroyed their appetite for angels' food! That, I repeat, is the most mournful aspect of our modern and insatiable passion for piquancy. If I let my soul absorb itself in the sensational novel, the hair-raising drama, and the blood-curdling film, I find myself losing appreciation for the finer and gentler things in life. I no longer glory, as I used to do, in the sweetness of the morning air and the glitter of the dew-drenched grass; in the purling stream and the fern-draped hills; in the curling waves and the twinkling stars. The bound of the hare and the flight of the sea-bird lose their charm for me. The world is robbed of its wonder and its witchery when my eyes grow accustomed to the gaudy blinding glare. Jenny Lind was asked why she renounced the stage. She was sitting at the moment on the sands by the seaside, with her Bible on her knee. She pointed her questioner to the setting sun, transforming the ocean into a sea of glory. 'I found,' she said, 'that I was losing my taste for *that*, and' —holding up her Bible—'my taste for *this*; so I

gave it up!' She was a wise woman. Onions are fine things in their own way. God has undoubtedly left a place in His world for the strong, vivid, elemental things. But they must be kept to that place. God has strewn the ground around me with the food that angels eat, and I must allow nothing on earth to destroy my taste for such sublime and wondrous fare.

## IV

## ON GETTING OVER THINGS

We get over things. It is the most amazing faculty that we possess. War or pestilence; drought or famine; fire or flood; it does not matter. However devastating the catastrophe, however frightful the slaughter, however total the eclipse, we surmount our sorrows and find ourselves still smiling when the storm is overpast. I remember once penetrating into the wild and desolate interior of New Zealand. From a jagged and lonely eminence I surveyed a landscape that almost frightened one. Not a house was in sight, nor a road, nor one living creature, nor any sign of civilization. I looked in every direction at what seemed to have been the work of angry Titans. Far as the eye could see, the earth around me appeared to have been a battle-field on which an army of giants had pelted each other with mountains. The whole country was broken, weird, precipitous, and grand. In every direction huge cliffs towered

perpendicularly about you; bottomless abysses yawned at your feet; and every scarped pinnacle and beetling crag scowled menacingly at your littleness and scowled defiance at your approach. One wondered by what titanic forces the country had been so ruthlessly crushed and crumbled and torn to shreds. Did any startled eye witness this volcanic frolic? What a sight it must have been to have watched these towering ranges split and scattered; to have seen the placid snowclad heights shivered, like fragile vases, to fragments; to have beheld the mountains tossed about like pebbles; to have seen the valleys torn and rent and twisted; and the rivers flung back in terror to make for themselves new channels as best they could! It must have been a fearsome and wondrous spectacle to have observed the slumbering forces of the universe in such a burst of passion! Nature must have despaired of her quiet and sylvan landscape. 'It is ruined,' she sobbed; 'it can never be the same again!' No, it can never be the same again. The bright colours of the kaleidoscope do not form the same mosaic a second time. But Nature has got over her grief, for all that. For see! All up these tortured and angular valleys the great evergreen bush is growing in luxurious profusion. Every slope is densely clothed with a glorious tangle of magnificent forestry. From the branches that wave

triumphantly from the dizzy heights above, to those that mingle with the delicate mosses in the valley, the verdure nowhere knows a break. Even on the steep rocky faces the persistent vegetation somehow finds for itself a precarious foothold ; and where the trees fear to venture the lichen atones for their absence. Up through every crack and cranny the ferns are pushing their graceful fronds. It is a marvellous recovery. Indeed, the landscape is really better worth seeing to-day than in those tranquil days, centuries ago, before the Titans lost their temper, and began to splinter the summits.

Travellers in South America frequently comment upon the same phenomenon. Prescott tells us how Cortes, on his historic march to Mexico, passed through regions that had once gleamed with volcanic fires. The whole country had been swept by the flames, and torn by the fury of these frightful eruptions. As the traveller presses on, his road passes along vast tracts of lava, bristling in the innumerable fantastic forms into which the fiery torrent has been thrown by the obstacles in its career. But as he casts his eye down some steep slope, or almost unfathomable ravine, on the margin of the road, he sees their depths glowing with the rich blooms and enamelled vegetation of the tropics. His vision sweeps across plains of exuberant fertility, almost impervious from thickets of aromatic shrubs

and wild flowers, in the midst of which tower up trees of that magnificent growth which is found only in these latitudes. It is an intoxicating panorama of brilliant colour and sweetest perfume. Kingsley and Wallace, too, remark upon these great volcanic rents and gashes that have been healed by verdure of rare magnificence and orchids of surpassing loveliness. 'Even the gardens of England were a desert in comparison! All around them were orange- and lemon-trees, the fruit of which, in that strange coloured light of the fireflies, flashed in their eyes like balls of burnished gold and emerald; while great white tassels, swinging from every tree in the breeze which swept the glade, tossed in their faces a fragrant snow of blossoms and glittering drops of perfumed dew.' It is thus that, like the oyster that conceals its scar beneath a pearl, Nature heals her wounds with loveliness. She gets over things.

And so do we. For, after all, the world about us is but a shadow, a transitory and flickering shadow, of the actual and greater world within us. Yes, the incomparably greater world within us; for what is a world of grass and granite compared with a world of blood and tears? What is the cleaving of an Alp compared with the breaking of a heart? What is the sweep of a tornado, the roar of a prairie-fire, or the booming thunder of an avalanche, compared with the cry of a child in pain? 'All

visible things,' as Carlyle has taught us, 'are emblems. What thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly speaking is not there at all. Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea and body it forth.' The soul is liable to great volcanic processes. There come to it tragic and tremendous hours when all its depths are broken up, all its landmarks shattered, and all its streams turned rudely back. For weal or for woe everything is suddenly and strangely changed. Amidst the crash of ruin and the loss of all, the soul sobs out its pitiful lament. 'Everything has gone!' it cries. 'I can never be the same again! I can never get over it!' But Time is a great healer. His touch is so gentle that the poor patient is not conscious of its pressure. The days pass, and the weeks, and the months, and the years. Like the trees that start from the rocky faces, and the ferns that creep out of every cranny in the ruined horizon, new interests steal imperceptibly into life. There come new faces, new loves, new thoughts, and new sympathies. The heart responds to fresh influences and bravely declines to die. And whilst the days that are dead are embalmed in costliest spices, and lie in the most holy place of the temple of memory, the soul discovers with surprise that it has surmounted the cruel shock of earlier shipwreck, and can once more greet the sea.

I am writing in days of war. The situation is without precedent. A dozen nations are in death-grips with each other. Twenty million men are in the field. Every hour brings us news of ships that have been sunk, regiments that have been annihilated, thousands of brave men who have been slaughtered. Never since the world began were so many men writhing in mortal anguish, so many women weeping, so many children fatherless. And whilst a hundred thousand women know that they will see no more the face that was all the world to them, millions of others are sleepless with haunting fear and terrible anxiety. And every day I hear good men moan that the world can never be the same again. 'We shall never get over it!' they tell me. It is the old mistake, the mistake that we always make in the hour of our sad and bitter grief. 'We shall never get over it!' Of course we shall! And as the fields are sweeter, and the flowers exhale a richer perfume, after the thunder-clouds have broken and the storm has spent its strength, so we shall find ourselves living in a kindlier world when the anguish of to-day is over-past. Much of our old civilization, with its veneer of politeness and its heart of barbarism, will have been riven as the ranges were riven by the earth-quake. But out of the wreckage shall come the healthier day. The wounds will heal as they always

heal, and the scars will stay as they always stay; but they will stay to warn us against perpetuating our ancient follies. Empires will never again regard their militarism as their pride.

Surely this torrent of blood that is streaming through the trenches and crimsoning the seas is sacrificial blood! It is an ancient principle, and of loftiest sanction, that it is sometimes good for one man to die that many may be saved from destruction. If, out of its present agony, the world emerges into the peace and sunshine of a holier day, every man who laid down his life in the awful struggle will have died in that sacred and vicarious way. This generation will have wept and bled and suffered that unborn generations may go scatheless. It is the old story:

> No mortal born without the dew
> Of solemn pain on mother's brow;
> No harvest's golden yield save through
> The toil and tearing of the plough.

It was only through the Cross that the Saviour of men found a way into the joy that was set before Him, and the world therefore cannot expect to come to its own along a bloodless road.

The recuperative forces that lurk within us are the divinest things about us. I cut my hand; and, before the knife is well out of the gash, a million

invisible agents are at work to repair the damage. It is our irrepressible faculty for getting over things. No minister can have failed, at some time or other, to stand in amazement before it. We have all known men who were not only wicked, but who bore in their body the marks of their vice. It was stamped upon the face; it was evident in the stoop of the frame; it betrayed itself in the shuffle that should have been a stride. We have known such men, I say, and heard their pitiful confessions. And the most heartrending thing about them was their despair. They could believe that the love of God was vast enough to find room for them; but just look! 'Look at me!' a man said to me one night, remembering what he once was and surveying the wreckage that remained, 'look at me!' And truly it was a sight to make angels weep. 'I can never be the same again,' he said in effect, 'I can never get over it!' But he did; and there is as much difference between the man that I saw that night and the man who greets me to-day as there was between the man whom he remembered and the man he then surveyed. It is wonderful how the old light returns to the eye, the old grace to the form, the old buoyancy to the step, and how, with these, a new softness creeps into the countenance and a new gentleness into the voice when the things that wound are thrown away and the healing powers

get their chance. It is only then that we really discover the marvel of getting over things.

Indeed, unless we are on our guard this magical faculty will be our undoing. The tendency is, as we have seen, to return to our earlier state, to recover from the change. And the forces that work in that direction do not pause to ask if the change that has come about is a change for the better or a change for the worse. They only know that a cataclysmic change has been effected, and that it is their business to help us back to our first and natural condition. But there are changes that sometimes overtake us from which we do not wish to recover; and we must be on ceaseless vigil against the well-meaning forces that only live to abolish all signs of alteration. No man ever yet threw off his old self and entered into new life without being conscious that millions of invisible toilers were at work to undo the change that had been effected. They are helping him to get over it, and he must firmly decline their misdirected offices.

'"Father!" said young Dr. Ralph Dexter to the old doctor in *The Spinner in the Sun*, "father! it may be because I'm young, but I hold before me, very strongly, the ideals of our profession. It seems to me a very beautiful and wonderful life that is opening up before me, always to help, to give, to heal. I feel as though I had been dedicated to some

sacred calling, some lifelong service. And service means brotherhood."

'" *You'll get over that!*" returned the old doctor curtly, yet not without a certain secret admiration. " *You'll get over that* when you've had to engage a lawyer to collect your modest wages for your uplifting work, the healed not being sufficiently grateful to pay the healer. When you've gone ten miles in the dead of winter, at midnight, to take a pin out of a squalling baby's back, why, you may change your mind!"'

And later on in the same story Myrtle Reed gives us another dialogue between the two doctors.

'" I may be wrong," remarked Ralph, " but I've always believed that nothing is so bad that it can't be made better."

'" The unfailing earmark of youth," the old man replies; " *you'll get over that!*"'

Old Dr. Dexter is quite right. Good or bad, the tendency is to get over things. Many a man has entered his business or profession with the highest and most roseate ideals, and the tragedy of his life lay in the fact that he recovered from them.

Yes, there is nothing that we cannot get over. Our recuperative faculties know no limit. None of our diseases are incurable. I knew an old lady who really thought that her malady was fatal. She fancied that she could never recover. She even told

me that the doctor had informed her that her case was hopeless. She lay back upon her pillow, and her snowy hair shamed the whiteness about her. 'I shall never get over it,' she sighed, '*I shall never get over it!*' But she did. We sang 'Rock of Ages' beside her sunlit grave this afternoon.

## V

## NAMING THE BABY

WILD horses shall not drag from me the wonderful secret that suggested my theme. Suffice it to say that it had to do with the naming of a baby. And the naming of a baby is really one of the most momentous events upon which the sentinel stars look down. There is more in it than a cursory observer would suppose. Tennyson recognized this when his first son was born, the son who was destined to become the biographer of his distinguished sire and the Governor-General of our Australian Commonwealth. Whilst revelling in the proud ecstasies of early fatherhood, he sought the companionship of his intimate friend, Henry Hallam, the historian. They were strolling together one day in a beautiful English churchyard.

'What name do you mean to give him?' asked Hallam.

'Well, we thought of calling him Hallam,' replied the poet.

'Oh! had you not better call him Alfred, after yourself?' suggested the historian.

'Aye!' replied the naïve bard, '*but what if he should turn out to be a fool?*'

Ah, there's the rub. It turned out all right, as it happened. The boy was no fool, as the world very well knows; but if you examine the story under a microscope you will discover that it is encrusted with a golden wealth of philosophy. For the point is that the baby's name sets before the baby a certain standard of achievement. The baby's name commits the baby to something. Names, even in the ordinary life of the home and the street, are infinitely more than mere tags attached to us for purposes of convenience and identification.

In describing the striking experiences through which he passed on being made a freeman, Booker T. Washington, the slave who carved his way to statesmanship, tells us that his greatest difficulty lay in regard to a name. Slaves have no names; no authentic genealogy; no family history; no ancestral traditions. They have, therefore, nothing to live up to. Mr. Booker Washington himself invented his own name. 'More than once,' he says 'I tried to picture myself in the position of a boy or man with an honoured and distinguished ancestry. As it is, I have no idea who my grandmother was. The very fact that the white boy is conscious that, if he fails,

he will disgrace the whole family record is of tremendous value in helping him to resist temptations. And the fact that the individual has behind him a proud family history serves as a stimulus to help him to overcome obstacles when striving for success.' Every student of biography knows how frequently men have been restrained from doing evil, or inspired to lofty achievement, by the honour in which a cherished memory has compelled them to hold the names they are allowed to bear. Every schoolboy knows the story of the Grecian coward whose name was Alexander. His cowardice seemed the more contemptible because of his distinguished name; and his commander, Alexander the Great, ordered him either to change his name or to prove himself brave.

I notice that the American people have lately been rudely awakened to a recognition of the fact that a nation that can boast of a splendid galaxy of illustrious names stands involved, not only in a great and priceless heritage, but also in a weighty national responsibility. Three citizens of the United States, bearing three of the most distinguished names in American history, have recently figured with painful prominence before the criminal courts of that country. 'It is not rarely,' as a leading American journal remarks, 'that a man who has acquired credit and reputation ruins his own good

name by some act of fraud or passion. It is much rarer that the case appears of one who soils the good name of a distinguished father. But it is without parallel that three names, borne by men the most famous in our annals, should all have been so foully soiled by their sons.' And the pitiable element in the case is not relieved by the circumstance that these unhappy men have clearly inherited, with their fathers' names, something of their fathers' genius. The fact is that American soil has proved singularly congenial to the growth of greatness. The length of America's scroll of fame is altogether out of proportion to the brevity of her history. The stirring epochs of her short career have developed a phenomenal wealth of leaders in all the arts and crafts of national life. In statesmanship, in arms, in letters, and in inventive science, she can produce a record of which many nations, very much older, might be pardonably proud. And she therefore displays a perfectly natural and honourable solicitude when she looks with serious concern on the untoward happenings that have recently smudged some of those fair names which she so justly regards as the shining hoard and cherished legacy which have been bequeathed to her by a singularly eventful past.

'Names!' exclaims Carlyle's Teufelsdrockh. 'Could I unfold the influence of names, I were a

second greater Trismegistus!' Names occupy a place in literature peculiarly their own. From Homer downwards, all great writers have recognized their magical value. The most superficial readers of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* must have noticed how liberally every page is sprinkled with capital letters. The name of a god or of a hero blazes like an oriflamme in almost every line. And Macaulay, in accounting for the peculiar charm of Milton, says that none of his poems are more generally known or more frequently repeated than those that are little more than muster-rolls of names. 'They are not always more appropriate,' he says, 'or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, these names produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the novel scenes and manners of a distant region. A third evokes all the dear, classical recollections of childhood—the schoolroom, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance—the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted

forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamoured knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.'

To tell the whole truth, I rather suspect that Macaulay appreciated this subtle art so highly in Milton because he himself had mastered the trick so thoroughly. He knew what magic slumbered in that wondrous wand. His own dexterity in conjuring with heroic names is at least as marvellous as Milton's. In his *Victorian Age in Literature*, Mr. G. K. Chesterton says that Macaulay felt and used names like trumpets. 'The reader's greatest joy is in the writer's own joy,' he says, 'when he can let his last phrase fall like a hammer on some resounding names, such as Hildebrand or Charlemagne, the eagles of Rome or the pillars of Hercules. As with Sir Walter Scott, some of the best things in his prose and poetry are the surnames that he did not make. That is exactly where Macaulay is great. He is almost Homeric. The whole triumph turns upon mere names.' We have all wondered at the uncanny ingenuity that Bunyan and Dickens displayed in the manufacture of names to suit their droll and striking characters; but we are compelled to confess that Homer and Milton and Macaulay reveal a still higher phase of genius, for they succeed in marshalling with rhythmic and dramatic effect the actual names that living men have borne, and

in weaving those names into glorious pageants of extraordinary impressiveness and splendour.

It is very odd, the way in which history and prophecy meet and mingle in the naming of the baby. A friend of mine has just named his child after John Wesley. He has clearly done so in the fond hope that the august virtues of the great Methodist may be duplicated and revived in a generation that is coming. It is an ingenious device for transferring the moral excellences of the remote past to the dim and distant regions of an unborn future. The phenomenon sometimes becomes positively pathetic. I remember reading, in the stirring annals of the Melanesian Mission, of a native boy whom Bishop John Selwyn had in training at Norfolk Island. He had been brought from one of the most barbarous of the South Sea peoples, and did not promise particularly well. One day Bishop Selwyn had occasion to rebuke him for his stubborn and refractory behaviour. The boy instantly flew into a passion and struck the Bishop a cruel blow in the face. It was an unheard-of incident, and all who saw it stood aghast. The Bishop said nothing, but turned and walked quietly away. The conduct of the lad continued to be most recalcitrant, and he was at last returned to his own island as incorrigible. There he soon relapsed into all the debasements of a savage and cannibal people. Many years after-

wards a missionary on that island was summoned post-haste to visit a sick man. It proved to be Dr. Selwyn's old student. He was dying, and desired Christian baptism. The missionary asked him by what name he would like to be known. 'Call me John Selwyn,' the dying man replied, 'because *he taught me what Christ was like* that day when I struck him.'

We have a wonderful way of associating certain qualities with certain names. The name becomes fragrant, not as the rose is fragrant, but as the clay is fragrant that has long lain with the rose. I see that two European newspapers have recently taken a vote as to the most popular name for a boy and the most popular name for a girl. And in the result the names of John and Mary hopelessly outdistanced all competitors. But why? There is nothing in the name of John or in that of Mary to account for such general attachment. Some names, like Lily, or Rose, or Violet, suggest beautiful images, and are loved on that account. But the name of John and the name of Mary suggest nothing but the memory of certain wearers. How, then, are we to account for it? The riddle is easily read. Long, long ago, on a green hill far away, there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and the disciple whom Jesus loved. And, when Mary left that awful and tragic scene, she left it, as Jesus Himself

desired that she should leave it, leaning on the arm of John. And because those two were first in the human love of Jesus, their names have occupied a place of special fondness in the hearts of all men ever since. Like the fly held in the amber, the memory of great and sterling qualities is encased and perpetuated in the very names we bear.

I like to dwell on that memorable scene that took place at the burial of Longfellow. A notable company gathered at the poet's funeral; and, among them, Emerson came up from Concord. His brilliant and majestic powers were in ruins. He stood for a long, long time looking down into the quiet, dead face of Longfellow, but said nothing. At last he turned sadly away, and, as he did so, he remarked to those who stood reverently by, 'The gentleman we are burying to-day was a sweet and beautiful soul, *but I forget his name!*' Yes, that is the beauty of it all. The name perpetuates and celebrates the memory of the goodness; but the memory of the goodness lingers after the memory of the name is lost. I shall enjoy the fragrance of the roses over my lattice when I can no longer recall the names by which they are distinguished.

Mrs. Booth used to love to tell a beautiful story of a man whose saintly life left its permanent and gracious impress upon her own. He seemed to grow in grace and charm and in all nobleness with every

day he lived. At the last he could speak of nothing but the glories of his Saviour, and his face was radiant with awe and affection whenever he mentioned that holy name. It chanced that, as he was dying, a document was discovered that imperatively required his signature. He held the pen for one brief moment, wrote, and fell back upon the pillows, dead. And on the paper he had written, not his own name, but the Name that is above every name. Within sight of the things within the veil, *that* seemed to be the only name that mattered.

## VI

## THE MISTRESS OF THE MARGIN

I LOVE a margin. There is something delicious, luxurious, glorious in the spacious field of creamy paper bounded by the black letterpress on the one side and the gilt edges on the other. Could anything be more abominable than a book that is printed to the uttermost extremities of every page? It is an outrage, I aver, on human nature. Indeed, it is an outrage upon Nature herself, for Nature loves her margins even more than I do. She goes in for margins on a truly stupendous scale. She wants a bird, so a dozen are hatched. She knows perfectly well that eleven out of the twelve are merely margin. She will throw them to the cats, and the foxes, and the weasels, and the snakes, and only keep the best of the batch. She wants a tree, so she plants a hundred. She knows that ninety and nine are margin, to be browsed down by cattle, but she means to make sure of her one. 'The roe

of a cod,' Grant Allen tells me, 'contains nearly ten million eggs; but, if each of those eggs produced a young fish which arrived at maturity, the whole sea would immediately become a solid mass of closely packed cod-fish.' But Nature has no intention of turning her bright blue ocean into a gigantic box of sardines; she is simply providing herself with a margin. Linnaeus says that a fly may multiply itself ten thousandfold in a fortnight. If this increase continued during the three summer months, he says, one fly at the beginning of summer would produce one hundred millions of millions of millions before the three months were over, and the air would be black with the horror. The probability, however, is that there are never one hundred millions of millions of millions of flies in the whole world. Nature is not arranging for a repetition of the plague of Egypt; she is simply gratifying her appetite for a margin. As Tennyson sings in 'In Memoriam,'

> of fifty seeds
> She often brings but one to bear.

So I suppose I learned my love of margins from her. At any rate, if anybody thinks me extravagant, they must quarrel with her and not with me.

I fancy there's a good deal in it. It is the margin that makes all the difference. If the work that absolutely must be done occupies every waking

moment of my time, I am a slave; but if it leaves a margin of a single hour, I am in clover. If my receipts will only just balance my expenditure, I am living a mere hand-to-mouth existence; but if they leave me a margin, I jingle the odd coins in my pocket with the pride of a prince. Mr. Micawber's philosophy comes back to us. 'Annual income—twenty pounds; annual expenditure—nineteen nineteen six; result—*happiness*. Annual income—twenty pounds; annual expenditure—twenty pounds ought and six; result—*misery*.' I believe that one of the supreme aims of a man's life should be to secure a margin. Nature does it, and we must copy her. A good life, like a good book, should have a good margin. I hate books whose pages are so crowded that you cannot handle them without putting your thumbs on the type. And, in exactly the same way, there are very few things more repelling than the feeling that a man has no time for you. It may be a most excellent book; but if it has no margin, I shall never grow fond of it. He may be a most excellent man; but if he lacks leisure, restfulness, poise, I shall never be able to love him.

It is difficult to account for it; but the fact most certainly is that the most winsome people in the world are the people who make you feel that they are never in a hurry. The man whom you trust

most readily is the man with a little time to spare, or who makes you think that he has. When my life gets tangled and twisted, and I want a minister to help me, I shall be too timid to approach the man who is always in a fluster. I feel instinctively that he is far too busy for poor me. He tears through life like a superannuated whirlwind. If I meet him on the street, his coat tails are always flying out behind him; his eyes wear a hunted look; and a sense of feverish haste is stamped upon his countenance. He reminds me of poor John Gilpin, for it is always neck or nothing with him. He seems to be everlastingly consulting his watch, and is always muttering something about his next engagement. He gets through an amazing number of odd jobs in the course of a day, and his diary will be a wonder to posterity. But he would be much better off in the long run if he cultivated a margin. He makes people feel at present that he is too busy for them. A poor woman, who is in great trouble about her son, heard him preach last Sunday, and felt that she would give anything to have a quiet talk with him about her sorrow, and kneel with him as he commended both her and her wayward boy to the Throne of the heavenly grace. But she dreads to be caught in the whirl of his week-a-day flurry, and stays away, her grief eating her heart out the while. A shrinking young girl is in perplexity about her love affairs,

and she feels sure, from some things he said in his sermon a few weeks ago, that he could help her. But she remembers that in his study he keeps a motto to remind her that his time is precious. If the words ' Beware of the dog ! ' were painted on his study door, they could not be more terrifying. She fears that, before she has half unfolded the tender tale that she scarcely likes to tell, his hand will be upon the doorknob. The tendency of the time is indisputably towards flurry—the flurry of business or the flurry of pleasure. I feel very sorry for these busy folk. Their energy is prodigious. But, for all that, they are losing life's best. Surely William Cowper had a secret in his soul when he told us that, in his mad career, John Gilpin lost the wine !

> And now, as he went bowing down,
> His reeking head full low,
> The bottles twain behind his back
> Were shattered at a blow
>
> Down ran the wine into the road,
> Most piteous to be seen,
> Which made his horses' flanks to smoke
> As they had basted been.

It is very easy to go too fast. In his *Forest*, Mr Stewart White gives us some lessons in bushmanship. ' As long as you restrain yourself,' he says, ' to a certain leisurely plodding, you get along without

extraordinary effort; but even a slight increase of speed drags fiercely at your feet. One good step is worth six stumbling steps; go only fast enough to assure that good one. An expert woods-walker is never in a hurry.' I was chatting the other day with the captain of a great steamship. The vessel is capable of steaming at the rate of seventeen knots an hour; but I noticed from the log that she never exceeds fifteen. I asked the reason. 'It is too expensive!' the captain answered. And then he told me the difference in the consumption of coal between steaming at fifteen and steaming at seventeen knots an hour. It was astounding. I recognized at once his wisdom in keeping the margin. When I next meet my busy brother, I shall tell him the story—if he can spare the time to listen. For, apart from the expense to himself of driving the engines at that high pressure, and apart from the loss of the wine, I feel sure that the folk who most need him love the ministry of a man with a margin. Even as I write, there rush back upon my mind the memories of the great doctors and eminent lawyers whose biographies I have read. How careful these busy men were to convey a certain impression of leisureliness! It will never do for a doctor to burst in upon his poor feverish patient, and throw everything into commotion. And see how composedly the lawyer listens to his client's tale! Wise men

these; and I must not be too proud to learn from them.

Great souls have ever been leisurely souls. I have no right to allow the rush and throb and tear of life to rob me of my restfulness. I must keep a quiet heart. I must be jealous of my margins. I must find time to climb the hills, to scour the valleys, to explore the bush, to row on the river, to stroll along the sands, to poke among the rocks, and to fish in the stream. I must cultivate the friendship of the fields and the ferns and the flowers. I must lie back in my easy chair, with my feet on the fender, and laugh with my friends. And pity me, men and angels, if I am too busy to romp with the children and to tell them a tale if they want it! There are many things in a man's life that he can give up, just as there are many things in a book that can be skipped, but the last thing to go must be the margin.

Now, rising from my desk for a moment, just to stretch my legs a little, I glance out of my study window at the busy world outside. I see men making bargains, reading newspapers, and talking politics. And really, when you come to analyse the thing, this matter of the margin touches that bustling world at every point. To begin with, the essential difference between life here in Australia and life in the old world is mainly a difference in the

breadth of the margin. Here life is not so hemmed in and cramped up as it must of necessity be there. Then, too, the whole tendency of modern legislation is in the direction of widening the margin. Everything tends to increase the leisure of the people. Early closing has come into its own. Shopkeepers put up their shutters quite early in the evening; the hours of the labourer have been considerably curtailed; and in other ways the leisure of the people has been greatly increased. Now in this broadening of life's margin there lie both tremendous possibilities and tremendous perils. The idleness of an entire community during a considerable proportion of its waking hours may become a huge national asset or a serious menace to the general wellbeing. People are too apt to suppose that character is determined by the main business of life. It is a fallacy. It is, as I have said, the margin that really matters. There is a section of time that remains to a man after the main business of life has been dealt with. It is the use to which that margin is put that reveals the true propensities of the individual and that, in the long run, determines the destiny of the nation.

Here, for example, are two bricklayers. They walk down the street side by side on their way to their work. From the time that the hour strikes for them to commence operations until the time comes to lay

aside their trowels for the day, they are pretty much alike. The one may be a philosopher and the other a scoundrel; but these traits will have small opportunity of betraying themselves as they chip away at the bricks in their hands, and ply their busy tasks. The intellectual proclivities of the one, and the vicious propensities of the other, will be held in the severest restraint as they labour side by side. The inexorable laws of industrial competition will keep their work up to a certain standard of excellence. But the moment that the tools are thrown aside the character of each man stands revealed. He is his own master. He is like a hound unleashed, and will now follow his bent without let or hindrance. And the more the State restricts the hours of toil, and multiplies the hours of leisure, the more does it increase the possibilities of good in the one case and the perils of evil-doing in the other. It is during that lengthened leisure that the one will apply himself to self-improvement, and, by developing himself, will increase the value of his citizenship to the State; and it is during that prolonged immunity from restraint that the other will compass his own deterioration and exert his influence for the general impoverishment.

Precisely the same law holds good in relation to the expenditure of money. The way in which a people spends its money represents the most crucial

test of national character. If a man spends his money wisely, he is a wise man; if he spends his money foolishly, he is a foolish man. But it is not along the main line of expenditure that the revelation is made. The principal items of expenditure are inevitable, and beyond the control of the individual, whoever or whatever he may be. A man must eat and wear clothes, whether he be a burglar or a bishop. The butcher, the baker, the grocer, and the milkman will call at every door; and you cannot argue as to the morals of a man from the fact that he eats bread, that he is fond of beef, or that he takes sugar with his porridge. There are certain main lines of expenditure along which each man, whatever his characteristics and idiosyncrasies, is resistlessly driven. But after he has submitted to this stern compulsion, and has paid his butcher, his baker, his grocer, and his milkman, then comes the test. What about the margin? Is there a margin? For upon the margin everything depends. We will suppose that, after paying for the things that he eats and the things that he wears, he still jingles in his pocket a dozen coins, with which he may do exactly as he likes. Now it is in the expenditure of that margin of money—as, in the other case, it was in the expenditure of that margin of leisure—that the real man will reveal himself. It is the use to which he puts that margin that declares his true

character and determines the contribution that he, as an individual citizen, will make to the national weal or woe.

Now, if this broadening margin means anything at all, it means that the responsibilities of the Church are increasing. For the Church is essentially the Mistress of the Margin. Concerning the expenditure of the hours occupied with labour, and concerning the money spent in the actual requisites of life, the statesman may have something to say. Legislation may deal with the hours of labour and the rate of wages. It may even influence the precise amount of the butcher's or the baker's bills. But when it comes to the hours that follow toil, and to the cash that remains after the principal accounts have been paid, the legislator finds himself in difficulties. He has come to the end of his tether. He cannot direct the people as to how to spend their spare cash. And, as we have seen, it is just this spare time and spare cash that determine everything. It is the dominating and deciding factor in the whole situation. It is manifest, therefore, that, important as are the functions of statesmanship, the really fundamental factors of individual conduct and of national life elude the most searching enactments of the most vigilant legislators. As the hours of labour shorten, and the margin of spare cash increases, the authority of the legislator becomes

less and less ; and the need for some force that shall shape the moral tone of the people becomes greater and greater. If the Church cannot supply that force, and become the Mistress of the Margin, the outlook is by no means reassuring. On one phase of this matter of the margin the Church holds a wonderful secret. She knows that there are people who, through no fault of their own, are marginless. They have neither a moment nor a penny to spare. Sickness, trouble, and the war of the world have been too much for them. They are right up against the wall ; and they know it. But the matter does not end there. I remember once entering a dingy little dwelling in the slums of London. In the squalid room a cripple girl sat sewing, and as she sewed she sang :

My Father is rich in houses and lands,
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands !
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full—He has riches untold.
I'm the child of a King ! the child of a King !
With Jesus my Saviour, I'm the child of a King !

What did this mean but that she had discovered that her cramped and narrow life had a spacious white margin after all ? In a recent speech at Glasgow, Mr. Lloyd George told a fine story of a quaint old Welsh preacher who was conducting the funeral service of a poor old fellow, a member

of his church, who, through no fault of his own, had had a very bad time of it. They could hardly find a space in the churchyard for his tomb. At last they got enough to make a brickless grave amidst towering monuments that pressed upon it, and the old minister, standing above it, said, 'Well, Davie, vach, you have had a narrow time right through life, and you have a very narrow place in death; but never you mind, old friend, I can see a day dawning for you when you will rise out of your narrow bed, and find plenty of room at the last. Ah!' he cried in a burst of natural eloquence, 'I can see it coming! I can see the day of the resurrection! I can see the dawn of immortality! There will be room, room, room, even for the poor! The light of that morning already gilds the hilltops!' What did he mean, that old Welsh minister, as he shaded his eyes with his hands and looked towards the East? He was pointing away from life's black and crowded letterpress to the white and spacious margin—the margin with the gilt edge—that was all.

## VII

## LILY

I WAS once advised to write a novel. I scouted the suggestion at the time; I scout it still. If you write a novel, you run a great risk. One of these days somebody may read it—you never know what queer things people may do nowadays. And if somebody should read it, your secret is out, and the paucity of your imagination stands grimly exposed. No, I shall not write a novel, although this article will be something in the nature of a novelette. For I have found a heroine, and many a full-blown novelist, having found a heroine, would consider that he had come upon a novel ready made. My heroine is Lily; and Lily—to break the news gently—was a pig. I say *was* advisedly, for Lily is dead, and therein lies the pathos of my story. And so I have my heroine, and I have my story, and I have my strong suffusion of sentiment all ready to my hand; and really, I feel half inclined to write my novel after all. But let me state the facts—for

which I am prepared to vouch—and then it will be time enough to see if we can weave them into a great and classical romance.

Away on the top of a hill, in a rural district of Tasmania, there stands a quaint little cottage. Down the slopes around, and away along the distant valleys, are great belts of virgin bush. But here on the hill is our quaint little cottage, and in or about the cottage you will find a quaint little couple. They may not be able to discuss the latest aspects of the Balkan question, or the Irish crisis, or the Mexican embroglio; but they can discuss questions that are very much older and that are likely to last very much longer. For they can discuss fowls and sheep and pigs; and, depend upon it, fowls and sheep and pigs were discussed long before the Balkan question was dreamed of, and fowls and sheep and pigs will be discussed long after the Balkan question is forgotten. And so the old couple make you feel ashamed of your simpering superficiality; you are amazed that you can have grown so excited about the things of a moment; and you blush for your own ignorance of the things that were and are and shall be. Yes, John and Mary can discuss fowls, for they have a dozen of them, and they call each bird by name. Whilst poor Mary's back was turned for a moment the rooster flew on to the table.

'Really, Tom, you naughty boy!' she cried, on discovering the outrage. 'I am ashamed of you!' And to impress the whole feathered community with the enormity of the offence, she proceeded to drive them all out of the kitchen.

'Go on, Lucie,' she cried, a note of sadness betraying itself in her voice in spite of her assumed severity. 'Go on, Lucie,' and she flapped her apron to show that she meant it, much as an advancing army might defiantly flutter its flag. 'Go on; and you too, Minnie; and Nellie, and Kate, and Nancie; you must all go! It was a dreadful thing to do; I don't know what you were thinking of, Tom!'

I said that John and Mary could discuss sheep; but their flock was a very limited one, for it consisted entirely of Birdie, the pet lamb. I cannot tell —probably through some defect in my imagination —why they called him 'Birdie,' nor, for the matter of that, why they called him a lamb. I can imagine that he may have been a lamb once; but of feathers I could discover no trace at all. Yes, after all, these are prosaic details, and only show how incompetent a novelist I should prove to be. I grovel when I ought to soar. John and Mary were very fond of Birdie, and Birdie was very fond of them. He came trotting up when he was called, wagging his long tail as though it were proof positive that he was still a lamb. It was scarcely a triumph

of logic on Birdie's part, and yet it was just about as good as the artistic subterfuges by which lots of us try to convince the world and his wife that we are still in the charming stage of lamb-like simplicity. And then there was Lily.

The old couple were very fond of Lily. How carefully they made her bed on cold nights! How considerately they fed her on boiled potatoes, skim milk, and other wondrous delicacies! She, too, came shambling up whenever she heard her name, and, with a grunt, acknowledged their bounty. 'Dear old Lily,' poor Mary exclaimed fervently, as Lily lifted her snout to be rubbed, and looked with queer, piggish eyes into those of her doting mistress.

Yes, Lily was a pig, but she was none the worse for that; and if any ridiculous person objects to my taking a pig for my heroine, I shall take offence and write no more novels. Lily, I repeat, was none the worse for being a pig. And I am sure that John and Mary were none the worse for loving her. It is always safe to love, for if you love that which cannot profit by your love, your love comes back to you, like Noah's dove, and you yourself are none the poorer. But I am not at all sure that affection was wasted on Lily. Why should it be? There is no disgrace in being born a pig. It did not even show bad taste on Lily's part, for Lily was not asked. She came; and found, on arrival, that she was what

men called a pig; and as a pig she performed her part so well that those who knew her grew very fond of her. What more can the best of us do? And, after all, why this squeamishness? Why this revulsion of feeling when I announce that my heroine is a pig? I aver that it is a species of snobbery—a very contemptible species of snobbery. Booker Washington used to declare that a high-grade Berkshire boar, or a Poland China sow, is one of the finest sights on this planet. And one of our own philosophers has gone into rhapsodies over the pig. 'Pigs,' he says, 'always seem to me like a fallen race that has seen better days. They are able, intellectual, inquisitive creatures. When they are driven from place to place, they are not gentle or meek, like cows and sheep, who follow the line of least resistance. The pig is suspicious and cautious; he is sure that there is some uncomfortable plot on foot, not wholly for his good, which he must try to thwart if he can. Then, too, he never seems quite at home in his deplorably filthy surroundings; he looks at you, up to the knees in ooze, out of his little eyes as if he would live in a more cleanly way if he were permitted. Pigs always remind me of the mariners of Homer, who were transformed by Circe; there is a dreadful humanity about them, as if they were trying to endure their base conditions philosophically, waiting for their release.' All this I entreat my critic

to lay well to heart before he judges me too severely for selecting Lily as my heroine.

I suppose the truth is, if only my supercilious critics could be trusted to tell the whole truth, that Lily is not good-looking enough for them. But that, again, is all a question of taste. Beauty is relative and not absolute. My critics may themselves be at fault. The real trouble may be, not want of comeliness in Lily, but a sad lack of appreciation in themselves. I notice that the champion Yorkshire sow at the Sydney Show this year was Mr. E. Jenkins' 'Queen of Beauty'; and as I gazed upon her photograph and noted her alluring name, I thought once more of Lily and laughed in my sleeve at my critics. I once spent a week with an old Lincolnshire gentleman at Kirwee, in New Zealand; and almost before I had been able to bolt the meal that awaited my arrival, he begged me to come and see the pigs. And at the very first animal to which we came my happy host rubbed his hands in an ecstasy of pride, whilst his eyes fairly sparkled. 'Bean't he a beauty?' he asked me excitedly. And I answered confidently that he was. I could see at a glance that the pig was a beauty *to him*; and if he was a beauty to him, he *was* a beauty, and there remained no more to be said. I remember reading a story of two ministers who met beneath the hospitable roof of an old-fashioned English

farm-house. One of them no sooner approached the table than he uttered an exclamation of delight. Picking up one of the cups, he spoke of the wonderful beauty of the china. He held the plates up to the light and asked the others to see how thin they were, and went into ecstasies over the wondrous old china that had been in the farm-house for many generations. The other took little interest in his talk, and could not be aroused to enthusiasm over the china; but when the farmer took out of his cupboard some old books, one of which was a black-letter commentary, he became excited. He turned the pages over lovingly, and pointed to the quaint initials, and became eloquent over their beauties. The farmer thought both men silly. Neither the china nor the books seemed precious to him. 'What a heap o' nonsense ye be talking surely,' he said. 'Now if ye want to see something worth seeing, come along o' me, and I'll show you the finest litter o' pigs in the country.'

I know, of course, that, beaten at every other point, my critics will take their stand on dietetic grounds. 'How can you have a pig for your heroine?' they will ask, with their noses turned up in disgust. 'See what a pig *eats*!' Now I confess that this objection did appear to me to be serious until I went into the matter a little more carefully.

Before abandoning poor Lily, and consigning her to everlasting obscurity, it seemed to me that I owed it to her, as a matter of common gallantry, to investigate this charge. An author has no more right than any other man to toy with feminine affections; and having pledged myself to Lily as my heroine, I dared not commit a breach of promise, save on most serious grounds. Into this matter of Lily's diet I therefore plunged, with results that have surprised myself. I find that Lily is the most fastidious of eaters. Experiments made in Sweden show that, out of 575 plants, the goat eats 449, and refuses 126; the sheep, out of 528 plants, eats 387, and refuses 141; the cow, out of 494 plants, eats 276, and refuses 218; the horse, out of 474 plants, eats 262, and refuses 212; whilst the pig, out of 243 plants, eats 72, and refuses 171. From all these fiery ordeals my heroine, therefore, emerges triumphant, and her critics cut a sorry figure. Theirs is the melancholy fate of all those who will insist on judging from appearances. It is the oldest mistake in the world, and it is certainly the saddest. Many, like Lily, have been judged hastily and falsely, and, as in Lily's case, the evil thought has clung to them as though it were a charge established, and under that dark cloud they have lived shadowed and embittered lives. Half the pathos of the universe lies just there.

One thing affords me unbounded pleasure. If I take Lily for my heroine after all, I shall be following a noble precedent—Michael Fairless, in *The Roadmender*, did something very much like it. 'In early spring,' she says, 'I took a long tramp. Towards afternoon, tired and thirsty, I sought water at a little lonely cottage. Bees worked and sang over the thyme and marjoram in the garden; and in a homely sty lived a solemn black pig, a pig with a history. It was no common utilitarian pig, but the honoured guest of the old couple who lived there; and the pig knew it. A year before, their youngest and only surviving child, then a man of five-and-twenty, had brought his mother the result of his savings in the shape of a fine young pig. A week later he lay dead of the typhoid. Hence the pig was sacred, cared for, and loved by this Darby and Joan.

'"'E be mos' like a child to me and the mother, an' mos' as sensible as a Christian, 'e be," the old man said.'

What a world of illusion this is, to be sure! It takes a good pair of eyes to see through its good-humoured trickery. You see a pig turning this way and that way as he wanders aimlessly about the yard, and you never dream of romance. And yet that pig is none other than Lily! You see another pig in a commonplace sty, and you never dream of

pathos; but old Joan wipes a tear from her eye with her apron when she remembers how that pig came into her possession. There is a world of poetry in pig-sties. Yes, and pathos, too, of its kind. For, as I said, Lily is dead. It was this way.

John and Mary are not rich; and a pig is a pig.

'What about Lily, Mary?' John asked awkwardly one day. 'You see, Mary, she's got to die. If we keep her, she'll die. And if we sell her, she'll only die. If we keep her, Mary, she may die of some disease, and we shall see her in pain. If we sell her, she will die suddenly, and feel no pain. And then, Mary,' he continued slowly, as though afraid to introduce so prosaic an aspect of so pathetic a theme, 'and then, Mary, if she dies here, look at the loss, for Lily's a pig, you know! And if we sell her, look at the gain! And with part of the money we can get another pet, and be just as fond of it.'

There were protests and there were tears, but Lily went to market.

Awhile afterwards John came home from the city with a parcel. 'Mary,' he said hesitatingly, 'I've brought ye home a bit o' Lily! I thought I'd like to see how she'd eat.'

Next morning at breakfast they neither of them ate heartily, but they both tasted. There is food that is too sacred for a glut of appetite.

'Ah, well,' said John, at last, 'those who eat Lily will none of them say anything but good of her, that's *one* comfort.'

And Mary went silently off to see if she could find *another*.

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Boreham, Frank William
Mushrooms on the moor

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